

# *The RUC*



*One Man's Journey*  
*by*

*Dr John Hamill*

*Writing*  
*as Doyle*



# The Royal Ulster Constabulary

One Man's Journey

By

Dr. J Hamill

Writing as Doyle

**The Royal Ulster Constabulary ceased to exist at  
midnight on the 3 November 2001 with its name,  
insignia and proud tradition consigned to History.  
This betrayal was part of a scheme contrived by the  
British Government aided and abetted by the  
Government of**

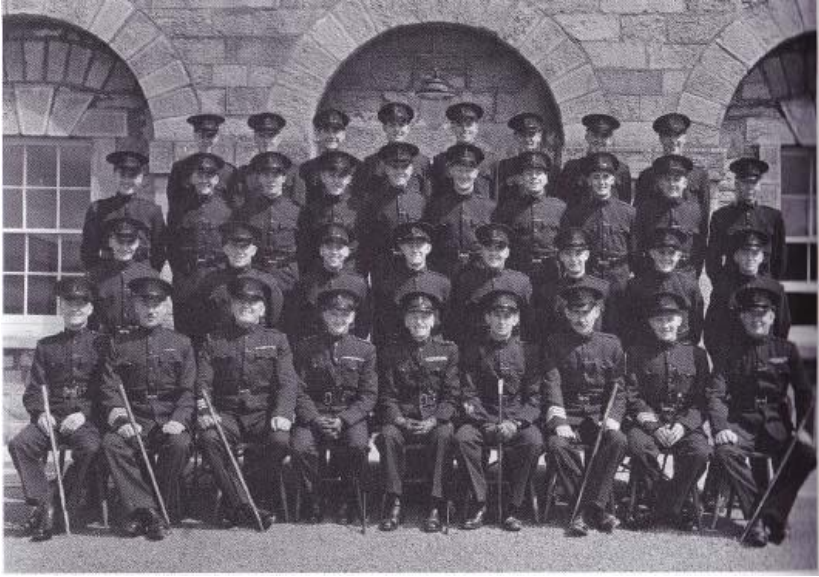
**Southern Ireland (Eire) to placate disingenuous  
political clamour and also, many believe, to ensure the  
safety of mainland Britain from the bombs of Irish  
Republican Terrorists seeking to bring about a united  
Ireland.**

**This book is dedicated  
To those who Served**

**Royal      Ulster      Constabulary      1922-2001**

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**L Squad 1955 RUC Depot**



**Twenty two year medal presentation N Squad**

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*Newtownards Depot  
first Platoon Reserve Force  
1954*



**Madden RUC Reserve Force 1957**

# Chapter 1

## Prologue

### The Royal Irish Constabulary

There has never been a definitive history written of either the Royal Irish Constabulary or its successor the Royal Ulster Constabulary. I do not intend to try and attempt such a momentous task, I shall leave that task to those more able than I to accomplish. This however may take some years to complete so in the interim period I should like to try and tell the story of one police officer who served, and help the reader understand through the eyes of others in this book whose lives are interwoven for the period of five years with that of the police officer, the dedication and personal interest that the members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary took in the communities in which they were privileged to serve. I hope it also relays to the reader, the difficulties experienced by the police in having to come to terms with the changing attitudes of both communities to the police in the aftermath of thirty years of rioting and terrorist warfare.

In stating in the first paragraph that there was no definitive writing on the two police forces, I must mention a book which come to mind being a book on the Royal Irish Constabulary written anonymously entitled ‘Tales of the RIC’ and published by William Blackwood and sons, Edinburgh and London 1921. On reading this book the reader can’t help but assume that it has been written by one who served, as a close inspection of the towns and town lands find that they are fictitious and which the writer had taken some pains to disguise these places from being recognised as at the time of writing the troubles in Ireland were still raging.



The Metropolitan police was set up in 1829 by Sir Robert Peel; however the Irish Constabulary had been formed around 1822 when Sir Robert Peel was Chief Secretary for Ireland it was then the embryo of the RIC was conceived. It wasn't however until 1835 that a single force for an area outside the cities of Dublin Belfast and Londonderry was set up, Belfast had already its own police force named the Bulkies until 1864. Dublin kept its own metropolitan police force until 1921. The new Irish Constabulary was commanded by an Inspector General directly responsible to the Chief Secretary for Ireland, it was responsible for law enforcement through out the country.

In 1865 Queen Victoria bestowed the Royal to the RIC along with its harp and shamrock crest surmounted by the crown. The force was commanded by an Inspector General and broken up into counties commanded by a county inspector; the counties were further broken up into districts commanded by a district inspector assisted by a head constable. There were also stations in outlying villages commanded by a sergeant and four constables. The policemen were not allowed to serve in their own areas or posted to anywhere they had relatives; they were moved at intervals to help with local knowledge and to keep them free from local patronage, as the RIC jealously guarded its independent from local authorities of all kinds. This tradition is still carried out by the RUC.

The constabulary code of regulations was first published in 1837 and one of its most significant decrees was the force should wear a uniform of Rifle green, this has been maintained to the present day by the RUC. The RIC had adopted the light infantry fast march 140 steps to the minute, and as a regimental march the jig 'the young May moon' which remained the regimental marching tune of the RUC. Such was the reputation of the RIC depot at Phoenix Park that in 1907 the colonial office stated that all commissioned officers for the colonial police service would be trained in Dublin. The RIC had already become a model for policing in other parts of the Empire as it was then so it is now as many police forces

worldwide look to the RUC as a police force they would emulate and there has been many exchanges of officers over the years who have come to Ireland and studied the methods of the RUC and gone back to their respective forces where they have gained promotion.



RUC Constables uniform complete with .455 Webley revolver and ammunition pouch, not shown is the leather baton case also worn on the waist belt. The only change since RIC days was the waist belt and accoutrements.

## **The Ulster Special Constabulary**

The special constabulary came into being in September of 1920, there would be 2,000 A specials who would be full time trained to support the RIC and under its command. They would be provided with uniform and paid £3-17-6 per week; they would get no pension but would be paid 10 shillings a week bounty in lieu of pension at the end of their service. The B specials were to be a voluntary force of part time officers; they would be required to do one night in every ten in their local community, and be paid £5 every six months to cover the cost of wear and tear of clothes and tram fares. There would be also a payment of 2/6 hot meal ration money for any extra duty. Those who used their bicycles were given another 1/- allowance, they were given caps and armbands for identification, they were to be armed and carry out duty with an RIC officer. It was intended to recruit 4,000 members for Belfast alone.

The first two platoons of special constables were deployed in Belfast in December 1920. The first victim died barely a month later when a platoon escorting a postman in Crossmaglen in Co Armagh was ambushed.

On 4 April 1922 after a farewell parade in Phoenix Park Depot the RIC were formally disbanded. The 2,000 RIC operating in the north were reprieved until June of that year and the disbandment was finally completed by August 1922. There was a committee set up to consider the question of policing, it was chaired by Lloyd Campbell a MP it included MP's JP's as well as Sir Charles Wickham (who later became the first Inspector General of the RUC and for which the row of instructors houses in Enniskillen were formally named as Wickham Row,

or fondly known by the rest of the recruits as baton row,) and Mr James Stevenson the Chief Constable of the Glasgow constabulary. Their brief was to establish a police force, from recruitment, conditions of service, the strength of the force and the cost, down to the extent of which the new force should be comprised of RIC and special constables of the Ulster Special Constabulary.

The committee's report was published on 28 March 1922 proposed a 3,000 strong force for the whole of the province. This force should be known as the Ulster Constabulary. The report also stated that members of both the RIC and Ulster Special Constabulary should be able to join the force and continue to receive the same rate of pay, but that new recruits should have a lower pay rate. It suggested the new force should be one third Catholic, recruited initially from existing members of the RIC with new Catholic recruits completing the fraction if there were not enough of the RIC members available. The majority of the new force would be drawn from the RIC and specials. The report was accepted by the NI Government and a few days later the advertisement appeared in the Irish newspapers for recruits for the new police force. On 29 April 1922 the King granted that the new force should be called the Royal Ulster Constabulary, in May of that year the Belfast Parliament passed the 1922 Constabulary Act and the RUC officially came into being on 1 June 1922.

The headquarters for the force was Atlantic Buildings in Waring Street Belfast and Sir Charles Wickham became the first Inspector General. This was the start of a long association between the RUC and the Ulster Special Constabulary who served at it side until they were disbanded in 1970. Between the time of its formation and 1942 the Ulster Special Constabulary had a large number of its members killed by terrorists. The Governor's Guard were a detachment of Special Constabulary who provided personal protection for the first Governor of Northern Ireland, the Duke of Abercorn. They were both stationed at his private residence at Baronscourt Co Tyrone and at his official residence

at Hillsborough Castle in Co Down. The nine pouch bandolier, green aiglet, and the 'GG' monogram shoulder badge were distinctive features of the uniform.



**USC uniform of Governor's Guard**



**Constables tunic 1970**

## The Royal Ulster Constabulary

From its birth the RUC had to have a dual role primarily it was to be a civilian police force and charged with the upholding of law and order, the protection of life and property and the keeping of the King's peace, as the IRA campaign was still in full swing it also had the task of dealing with the terrorist campaign. The year of 1922 was a terrible year for the North of Ireland with 295 murders 231 of which happened in the capital city of Belfast. However the following two years were peaceful with only four murders occurring.

The exact border between Northern Ireland and the Republic was finally settled on 3 December 1925 at Chequers after six days of negotiations, between the three governments. Exactly a week after the settlement Sir James Craig the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland announced the disbandment of 3,500 A Specials and 199 members of the part time C Specials, he asked Ulster employers to absorb the men into civilian employment.

This was the framework for maintaining law and order in Northern Ireland which lasted until 1969. The RUC backed up by the part time B Specials, not only policed the community but were responsible for protecting the border of the State and guarding against external and internal subversion..

# Chapter 1

## Back to his roots

The office was empty, save for a tall athletic looking man sitting at a desk intent on scrutinising the papers in front of him. This was Doyle an officer in the Royal Ulster Constabulary of twenty-five years experience. He was just completing the reports on young men keen to join the specialised unit in which he had served for the past twenty years.

Doyle extracted himself from his task, which was now complete he had sorted out those who were successful from those who would be returned to ordinary duty. All had shown keenness but it had been those who were careful and weighed up the situation had been chosen for the difficult tasks that they would encounter during their time with the unit. He sat back in his chair lit a cigarette and gazed out of the steel framed window in his office. His mind turned to that time twenty years ago that he came to Belfast to join the unit. He was keen and enthusiastic, five years serving in the country districts under strict Sergeants had honed him well for the new role he was to take on in a highly specialised branch.

From the age of five, Doyle had made up his mind to be a policeman. The idea had been kindled by his daily encounter with a rather large Constable of the R.U.C. He took the small boy by the hand, held up all the traffic, and saw him safely across the road to school, and in a soft southern Irish brogue said run along now son and don't get into any trouble. By the time other boys who had planned to be pilots, engine drivers, and other such things in their early years, had taken up apprenticeships or gone into commerce, Doyle with his single mindedness had still wanted to join the R.U.C and worked hard to this end.

As he took the last few puffs from the cigarette before extinguishing it in the ashtray he thought of how things had



changed since he first came to the unit. How the unit now had to combat the steadily worsening situation and had to take on a more dangerous role in the fight against terrorism. His reverie was cut short by the jangle of the phone on his desk ringing. He answered the phone it was his boss in his usual polite manner ordering Doyle to his office immediately.

Doyle knocked the door of the office with the very impressive nameplate that read Superintendent Hanrahan. A brusque voice from within call to enter, seated at a large desk was an equally large man about five years younger than Doyle. It was evident that the Superintendent was more used to flying an office desk than leading a party of men on a twelve mile search over broken country. Hanrahan was a bit envious of the loyalty the men showed to Doyle. The Superintendent was one of the young men who had gone into an apprenticeship in the shipyard and only came into the police service when there had been layoffs at Harland and Wolff. Doyle on the other hand was a career policeman through and through. While Doyle had been chasing and apprehending criminals, the Superintendent had been stuck in the law books trying for advancement.

Hanrahan beckoned Doyle to a chair both men had known each other for ten years. Of the Superintendent Doyle thought, credit where credit is due Hanrahan worked hard for his crowns and therefore was entitled to them. He was also aware of the Superintendents resentment of him. Hanrahan was the first to speak he told Doyle that when at HQ he had been given orders in a sealed envelope which he had to hand personally to Doyle. The expressed instructions that were given was to the effect that he Doyle was along with a colleague to say goodbye to their families and say they would be absent from home for some time. They were to then bring full kit and a sleeping bag to the unit and await further instructions.

This intrigued Doyle but try as he might he was unable to elicit any more information from Hanrahan. It had been agreed that Letson should be the colleague who would accompany him on this venture and that both should meet at the unit at 11pm that evening.

By 11pm a vehicle had been packed, Letson had moved it out in front of the main building ready for the road. The lights were on in the Superintendents' office Doyle parked his car and joined Letson in front of the building. On entering Hanrahan's office, the Superintendent handed documents to Doyle saying that they were to meet with other police at a designated station in County Antrim at 2am. Once there the sealed orders from HQ were to be opened and read.

The two men drove through the night towards the meeting point the content of the conversation was evidently what this sealed order contained. They arrived just before 2am and on entering the station, Doyle was please to see men there with whom he had served. He was doubly pleased to make again the acquaintance a squad mate of his Depot days who now had reached the rank of Chief Inspector. Both men reminisced about times gone by and then the obvious thing happened both asked the same question, what are you doing here. It now being just after 2am the sealed orders were opened. They read proceed to an abandoned R.U.C. Station in a village in County Tyrone take over the station and remain there until relieved.

This was the type of order Doyle liked straight to the point, it also appealed to Murphy the Chief Inspector as both men had been of the old school career policemen.

The years hadn't been kind to Murphy, he was overweight and it was evident that he was out of condition. Too many years Doyle thought behind a desk doing paperwork. The news was broken to the rest of the party congregated in the station this was met with the usual good natured wisecracks of the young RUC men who were eager to get on with the job. The officers retired with the local Superintendent to plan the operation. Doyle thought getting to the village under cover of darkness was an excellent idea and an approach from different roads into the village would make it less evident that a large number of police were on the move.

It was just after 4am that the large convoy pulled up at a small village station in Tyrone close to their objective. The \*Station

Orderly was surprised at such a number of strange police invading his station, but never balked when asked was there any tea on the go. He immediately obliged and after Doyle and Murphy had spoken to the station officer and gleaned the most recent information of terrorist movements in the area, they had a cup of tea and a slice of toast. This kindly supplied by the \*SO little did they know this was the last warm food they were to have for the next 48 hours. *\*Station Orderly Constable who carried out similar duties of a Desk Sergeant in the Metropolitan police.*

The grey mist, which usually accompanies the dawn in Co Tyrone, was swirling about the tree lined approach road to the little sleepy village nestling at the foot of the Sperrin Mountains. Suddenly there it was the police station long abandoned after the economy purge of Mr Bill Craig the then Minister of Home Affairs in the N.I. Government. These closures of rural police stations took place in every county in N.Ireland in the late sixties. Doyle mused that if only these stations had not have been closed the troubles of today might not have reached such an advanced stage.

About the same time as the police and Doyle were taking over the police station the alarm clock on the bedside table in the home of Seamus O'Farrell was sounding out the hour. From deep under the bedclothes a hairy arm appeared and fumbled about the table in search of the elusive clock, crash Seamus had knocked it onto the floor where it valiantly still gave out the hour. A small stocky individual with black curly hair appeared from under the sheets, all idea of sleep had left him. He shivered slightly in the mist of the grey dawn. This sure sign that the whiskey was dying in him, Seamus thought more than the whiskey was dying in him. He thought he also was about to expire. He quickly dressed and made his way down stairs, making a mental note not to retire to Mulligan's shebeen after a road stop again. There had been no police presence in the village and surrounding area unless for organised searches either by the Military or Police or at times both. The Provisional Irish Republican Army of which O'Farrell was the

commander would hold the population up on their lawful journeys by mounting a road stop comprising of two full Active Service Units. When there were no more motorists to harass they had the habit of retiring to Mulligan's which since the absence of the R.U.C had gained an almost 24 hour licence from the provies.

O'Farrell put the kettle on the gas cooker lit the gas; popped two rounds of bread into the toaster on the draining board switched it on and lit a cigarette. The kettle had just boiled and the toaster had shot its toast into the air, Seamus thinking he must adjust the spring to a lesser tension, when there was a loud knocking on the door. In a fraction of a second Seamus thought of the police and nearly bolted through the back door. The knocking now accompanied by a voice shouting to Seamus to open the door; Seamus recognised the voice; it was Barry Flynn, one of the volunteers who lived down in the village quite near to the abandoned police station.

This volunteer also had been on the road stop the previous night and had adjourned to Mulligan's shebeen for a bedtime drink. He had returned home at around three o'clock and fell into bed fully clothed in a drunken stupor. Seven o'clock rudely awakened him by a loud banging and clanking noise from the police station. On becoming fully awake, he was annoyed to hear the sound of many vehicles driving by and the sound of voices coming on the air from the direction of the station yard. He got up looked out and nearly died of fright as the sight that met his eyes he would never hope to see and that was of a great number of policemen in full uniform just outside his door. He nearly died there and then with fright as he thought they were here to take him away for being a member of an illegal army.

As he watched he soon realised that they were making their way into the abandoned police station not far from his home. Flynn breathed a sigh of relief and when all the hub bub had died down and the police were safely in the station he plucked up the courage to go and warn O'Farrell.

The door was opened by an irate O'Farrell who was about to lay in to Flynn with his tongue, only to stop short when he saw the evident fear in the man's eyes. 'Seamus it's terrible there is dozens of peelers in full uniform at the police station. I think they are taking it over'. This news startled O'Farrell as the last thing he wanted was nosey R.U.C men on his doorstep. He told Flynn to return home and observe the police and report back to him when he had something important to divulge. After Flynn had gone O'Farrell poured out a cup of tea, forgot about the toast, lit another cigarette and started to think things out.

Meanwhile back in the village, Doyle had with the years of experience made his way into the station and immediately ascended the stairs to try claim a room in which he could sleep. Unfortunately for Doyle the Chief Inspector, a cute Fermanagh man had commandeered the best room on the top floor. Doyle secured a small room towards the front of the station which commanded a good view of the main street and an equally good view of his native Sperrin. He lit a cigarette and looked out of the window towards the great glen, he wondered as the mists lifted whether there were any pheasant left there. He was interrupted in his thoughts by the sight of one of his countrymen going up the street with unusual haste. The man was taller than the normal for this part of Tyrone. He had long straight mousey brown hair, looked the worse for wear and was wearing the recognisable black leather coat and blue jeans associated not only with the provies but also with the U.V.F. Here thought Doyle was a member of the local ASU intent on carrying the news of the police arrival to some local commander. He made a mental note to discover the identity of this agent and if he was a player. This was it Doyle had come back to his roots, he had completed the circle.

## **In the horns of a dilemma**

The first day had been spent in securing the new station. The Sergeants along with Doyle and the Chief had surveyed the station and precincts agreed on the most advantageous lookout points and started organise the men in the fortification of these lookout posts. There were sandbags to fill and place at strategic points; rolls of armoured wire were to be placed in strategic places on the periphery of the station grounds. Doyle elected to fill and place sandbags. He remembered in his youth helping his uncle renew barbed wire fencing on the farm. The barbed wire had a habit when not nailed to a fence post of striking you in the most unusual places. The day wore on it was late in the afternoon that all the work was completed to the satisfaction of all present. It was teatime, the men were hungry and tired and the thoughts of a cold supper didn't help. As Doyle sat down to a tin of cold baked beans and a cup of tea boiled in a billy can on a small camping stove supplied by Letson, his mind strayed back to when he was eighteen and had just joined the RUC. It was the beginning of the 1950's troubles in Ireland. He had volunteered for a special commando unit whose personnel had been trained to take the fight to the enemy in the far-flung border areas where the trouble was raging against isolated police stations.

It had been a cold September day that his platoon had taken over an abandoned \*C of I rectory on the south Armagh Border. The building was Georgian made of stone and of course no damp course as in modern day houses. There was no heat of any kind and the water was running down the walls when it rained. It wasn't long before the IRA attacked the station. To their surprise however they were quickly pursued and were lucky to escape across the border evading capture. With the police now bringing the campaign to the terrorist the troubles soon abated. Doyle thought he was eighteen then and now at forty- four he was still living in barracks and combating terrorism. This was history repeating itself, after the frugal meal he went to the room Murphy

had made into an office come bedroom. The chief was glad to see him beckoned to him to take a seat on an upturned ammunition box. Both men discussed the tasks for the next day. They decided to make an early start with a road clearing exercise which Doyle thought would be two folds. It would leave a safe passage for the arrival of a convoy containing beds, cooker, cooking utensils and most important, food. The second benefit would be to show the locals and the Pira in particular that they were here to stay. He was sure when he saw Flynn scurrying along the main street, that the Pira would within forty -eight hours overcome their surprise and give or take another forty -eight hours or so would be scheming a counter move of some kind.

Doyle had been slightly out in his appraisal of the situation for O'Farrell got such a shock at the sudden and unexpected arrival of the police that forty -eight hours later he was still in a spin. It must be remembered that since the closure of the police station and the start of the recent troubles O'Farrell had been quick to utilise his position of commander to advance his own enterprises. There were a few pies that he had his finger in up to the knuckle. There fore the appearance of so many police could, given the chance, interfere greatly with his illicit distillation of the mountain dew. The protection racket he had going to supposedly replenish the war chest of the provies and also his political masters in Sinn Fein, and other quite lucrative ventures

he had been engaged in recently could also come to nought. The RUC would, as their want give their protection to both communities free of charge. It would also curtail the harassment of part time RUC Reserve and part time UDR personnel in the area and bring down the wrath of the army council on his head. He, although in a state of shock, quickly grasped the situation if the RUC were allowed to re establish themselves in and as part of the community it would not bode well with the Provisional I.R.A. He decided that something had to be done to remedy the situation but not yet. In the true style of all County Tyrone men he was prepared to sit back watch the thing develop and learn as much through his spies about the movements of the police. He couldn't

help wondering what had prompted the powers that be to send so many police to his village.

What seemed to elude him was the fact that the Active service units in most of the five villages that surrounded the Tyrone market town were actively involved with weekly attacks. These attacks were on police vehicles travelling between the HQ in the town and the outlying villages. There had also been attacks on members of the part time RUC Reserve and also part time UDR in some of the area adjacent to his village. One of these attacks on a police vehicle had nearly cost two young

Police constables their lives. Two members of an ASU had lay out on high ground overlooking a main road and waited for the oncoming blue Ford car. The police had removed all signs of police from their vehicles but failed to change the cars from the usual Vauxhall, Ford and Chrysler models, these models being quite easily identified by the terrorists as police vehicles. The local populace both nationalist and loyalist had learned early on in the campaign that the purchase of a British make of car was a no-no. Hence the great number of German, Japanese, and Italian cars on the roads of County Tyrone. It was easy for the two terrorists to lay in wait. When the ill -fated car approached the culvert under which they, the night before, had laid the explosives they just joined the two wires to the battery and Boom! No more, police car. The two constables in the car had been wary of the small bridge. They, well versed in the underhand and dastardly ways of the Provies, knowing that the favoured way to eliminate police was from a safe distance by means of the culvert bomb. What saved the young officers lives was when they were almost on the bridge the driver put his foot to the floor and speeded over the small bridge just as the two terrorists completed the circuit. The explosion came too late, demolishing the bridge but doing no further harm.

\* C o f I

Church of Ireland



## **The Watchers**

The first night at the station Doyle and Letson volunteered to take their turn on watch on the sandbag emplacements. While Letson took over the Sanger on the top floor, Doyle elected to relieve the young Constable manning the rear Sanger that was in an outhouse in the station yard.

This Sanger consisted of some slates being removed from the rear roof of the outhouse which had been an excellent idea as it allowed a full range of fire covering the fields at the back of the station. The fields ended where a high unkept hedge ran along the periphery of a bog. The bog was made up of the usual straggly soft wood bushes that were in abundance growing in the poor land which was associated with the hill farm country of his native Tyrone. He examined and checked the weapon handed on to him by the Constable. This was a self loading rifle with a night sight fixed to the sights. His training took over as he removed the magazine pulled back the bolt and checked the breech. After replacing the magazine and putting on the safety catch he tried and adjusted the night sights to suit his master eye. The sights lit up the whole area in a strange green ghostly glow. He noticed a movement to his right as he swept the area. It was a rabbit oblivious that it was under observation! The sights picked up the rabbit quite easily as Doyle steadied the weapon and watched the crosshair meet. One shot and the rabbit would have been dead. Doyle a hunter by nature and liking the chase was a police officer not a soldier. He wanted very much as his oath implied to protect and serve the public not to take life but to protect it. However things change and not always do we get what we want out of life.

Necessity made him a first class shot and proficient in the use of all the small arms needed by the RUC for the protection of the population against this new breed of terrorist. Many of whom went about slaughtering police, soldiers and innocent members of the public to advance the aims of their political masters in Sinn Fein. He let his thoughts stray to happier times in County Tyrone where

he had spent a large part of his teens. He remembered a night such as this, accompanied by his two cousins armed with ancient double barrel shotguns. They had been on an evening hunt, try as they might they didn't see a rabbit much less shoot one.

On returning home across a bog much the same as the one now in front of him they heard a loud groan coming from behind a turf stack. Then another loud groan and a pair of naked arms appeared above the stack. The three intrepid hunters immediately took to their heels across the bog at breakneck speed. They didn't stop until they reached the county road where they collapsed in a heap on the grass dyke. They all thought that this had been the proverbial banshee talked about by their elders that they had heard on the bog. Next day things became clearer to the young boys. One of the farm labourers at an adjacent farm had told friends: after a night in the local village inn he had been taken a short cut over the bog and sat down to take a rest. It appeared that he slept for a short while. He awakened to the sound of voices, stretched and began to get up from behind the turf stack only to find he was alone.

The only explanation he could think of was it must have been the banshees or the little folk. He didn't wait to investigate but took to his heels and ran in the opposite direction to the boys. The three hunters decided it was prudent not to mention their experience of the night before.

There was another movement that caught Doyle's eye it was a dark shape just in front of the tree line. He switched on the night sight and scanned the area in question. There it was as plain as day a fox, a large male and he appeared intent in stocking something to the left of Doyle and out of line with the night sight. Doyle moved the rifle a little to his left and picked out the little rabbit he had seen earlier. He was powerless to play a part in this and save the rabbit. Better to let nature take its course and hope the rabbit could evade capture by darting down a burrow.

He looked at his watch it was nearly time for the young Constable to relieve him. The fox reminded him of the mousey haired man

he had observed in the main street, he made another mental note to find out more about him. Doyle in his earlier criminal chasing days had thought it was of the utmost importance to build up a complete picture of the quarry. This he intended doing during his stay in the little sleepy village in County Tyrone. Once relieved he made his way towards the makeshift kitchen where some of the men were brewing tea. After scrounging a mug of tea and been given a rather dog-eared digestive biscuit by one of the young Constables he retired to his room; rolled out his sleeping bag and was soon off to sleep.

Later that morning he awoke refreshed and a bit surprised that he had slept so sound on the hard wooden floor. He shaved and washed in cold water, put on his uniform and went in search of a cup of tea and slice of toast.

On reaching the kitchen he was given this meagre breakfast, drank his tea and ate the toast, then settled down to have his first cigarette of the day. Other officers' started to appear at the kitchen door to be fed. After breakfast and just at first light they were ready to depart. Doyle had agreed with Letson to take the left flank while Letson covered the right. Then with the two riflemen taking the point and the sniper moving to control the high ground they prepared to clear the road leading west from the village.

The villagers, who had secured jobs in the market town, were surprised that morning on rounding a bend in the road to be confronted by a Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The officer bade them pull into the side of the road where other Constables searched their vehicles. Most if not all the locals were quite glad to see the police again on the Queen's Highway. This was due to the sure and certain knowledge that their fellow countrymen spent time in laying land mines. It was also common knowledge that if the police didn't oblige driving over the landmine the provies would just abandon it. There fore it would make sense that one would be safer travelling on a road on which there had been an RUC presence.

## **The Queen's Writ**

Doyle had hoped that the road clearance and road stop would show that the intention was the Queen's Writ should apply in every county of the Province of Ulster. He knew that the information concerning the exercise would reach the ears of the local Provisional commander and maybe would induce him to break cover to take a closer look at the police setup.

This was soon to come to fruition, as a volunteer by the name of Megaw and who had obtained a job with a firm in the town as van driver was stopped by the police patrol. He nearly passed out as he wasn't aware of the incursion of the police on the village the previous day as he lived in an isolated farm some distance from the village. The mere fact that he, an activist, and possibly known to the RUC suddenly encompassed by a large number of them aged him by five years. The police told him to move on and when he realised he wasn't for Long Kesh prison on a charge of being a member of a proscribed organisation or worse, he returned home by another route. All thought of work had left him; he telephoned in sick, got back into his car and drove towards the village. Once in the village he parked his car and headed for Flynn's house where he told the sleepy headed Flynn the bad news, after which he went home.

Of course, Flynn lost no time in going to O'Farrell's place and repeating what he had heard from the volunteer. That there was a large number of RUC patrolling the western approach road to the village well armed with Ruger Rifles. There appeared to be a tall athletic looking officer with clear blue eyes who Megaw thought was staring right through him; causing a shiver to run up his spine, like somebody just walked over his grave. This was true for Doyle had taken to observing the passengers of the cars stopped by the patrol. His attention was taken up by the driver of a green Nissan who appeared a bit furtive.

The driver of the car who was in his late thirties or early forties was very fidgety. He had fair hair cut short medium build and wearing an overall or shop coat. He had brown eyes that were darting about as if looking every where but at the police. Doyle noted the registration number and decided to check it out.

Meanwhile back at O'Farrell's Seamus was listening intently to the information being divulged to him. It was as he suspected the RUC were indeed trying to establish themselves in the community. This would have to be thwarted at all costs, it was however early days. So far the movements of the police hadn't interfered with any of O'Farrell's business ventures.

Paddy Mulligan stood in the doorway of his pub situated in the main street of the little Tyrone village. He was looking at the grey mist drifting down the street letting the light warmth of the autumn sun through. Paddy was not usually out of bed at this time of the morning. This was due to the non -arrival of O'Farrell, Flynn and company after closing time the previous evening. This left Mulligan's cash register a lot lighter just at the time Mrs Mulligan had announced she could be doing with a new coat for the winter. This sat heavily on Mulligan, as he was the fugal type of County Tyrone businessman who believed it was his solemn duty to amass as much money for himself as possible. He was interrupted in his thoughts by Flynn approaching from his right. He endeavoured to stop Flynn and to enquire why the local volunteers had not appeared in his pub the previous night. Flynn gave him a curt answer with the remark where was he, Mulligan that he didn't know the village roads were swarming with RUC men armed to the teeth. This news sent Mulligan into a flat spin; he remembered the poteen posing as good whiskey lining the shelves of his bar. He was thinking on his feet, the poteen would have to go. To add to his troubles he wasn't above re bottling the slops and drainage from the porter bottles. Realisation dawned on him that the Queen's Writ being enforced on the roads of the county was one thing, it was quite another when the officers of the law were fed up with harassing the local Provisional IRA and turned their attention to the Liquor Licensing Laws. This made Mulligan break out in a cold sweat. He made up his mind to have no more

business deals with O'Farrell concerning the purchase of the mountain dew.

**Mulligan's shebeen  
Where drink prices are  
keen**



## **The Convoy**

Doyle and the party of police from the village had completed the road clearance when the first lorry belonging to the convoy was sighted approaching their position from the West. As the rest came into view it brought wide grins to the policemen, who had visions of their first real meal in forty-eight hours. The drivers of the Lorries waved to the police on the ground as they passed. There also appeared from over a hill on the right a Lynx helicopter, giving top cover to the convoy. This could mean only one thing and that was a party of military following on at the rear.

Sure enough there was the roar of heavy lifting vehicles accompanied by the throb from the engines of low loaders. It was a sight for sore eyes as army vehicles appeared packed with Royal Engineers, Sappers, and where Engineers go so does the infantry.

This meant that the police could avail of a welcome rest as the infantry would cover the engineers and sappers as they went about their tasks. The foot patrol returned to the station. They saw that the Royal engineers were already hard at work using their heavy lifting gear to place large concrete slabs into position around the periphery of the station. Once inside Doyle was pleased to see more engineers wiring up large freezers and fridges in the outbuilding in which he had stood guard the previous night. In the kitchen work had already begun on the installation of a couple of brand new electric cookers. He knew from past experience that it would be quite some time until they were fully functional. The pangs of hunger he was now feeling for lack of proper food drove him in the direction of the field at the rear of the police station where he knew that military cooks would be preparing lunch for the sappers, engineers, and infantry men. His assumption had been right, as he approached a hurriedly erected field kitchen he could smell the appetising aroma of eggs and bacon being cooked. As he entered the tent he discovered that the rest of the men had the same



idea as quite a large queue had formed. The sergeant chef must have seen the look on his face for he addressed Doyle with a cheeky grin on his face, with the quip ‘don’t worry sir there will be plenty for everyone’. Doyle smiled back and took his place in the queue.

After Barry Flynn had imparted the news to O’Farrell concerning the police patrol passed on to him by Megaw, he returned home and decided to catch up on some lost sleep as with the police out on the road it would be quiet in the village. It was some dream that he had of the tricolour flying over Stormont and Gerry asking him if he would like to represent his county as a politician and member of the new Stormont Parliament. Barry had just accepted the offer from Gerry on the steps of Stormont when all of a sudden, the road shook and parliament buildings started to shake. At this moment, Flynn woke up to find his house shake and the picture of the Holy Father hanging at a peculiar angle on the wall at the foot of his bed. He got up, looked out of the window to see a number of Khaki clad British soldiers just outside his door.

This was the second time in the last twenty four hours he nearly had a nervous breakdown; at this point in time he strongly considered moving from the village in to the town. He muttered to himself that first police now military, it was too much for a volunteer to put up with. The other thing was that he decided to stay where he was if O’Farrell wanted to find out about the military he could do it himself. He was staying in the house until things had died down.

Meanwhile O’Farrell had made up his mind to go and observe the police on the road, not too close of course, but having seen them he would branch off and take an alternative route home. This venture however did not go quite to plan. He drove towards the village then down the main street. There he found himself suddenly looking down the barrel of a General Purpose Machine Gun trained on his vehicle from the front garden of the Chapel. The Chapel was on higher ground just about eye level when you are sitting in a car. This made his blood run cold and he cursed Flynn for not warning him about the military presence. He soon composed

himself as he realised this was a building party of military needed to reinforce the police station. He breathed a sigh of relief and nodded to the soldiers as they waved him on.

There was no choice left to him but to make a right turn and travel the road Flynn had told him the police had been on early that morning. This again made him curse Flynn as he hadn't travelled far when he came upon a party of police coming towards him. He observed that the police weren't wearing body armour. He also noted that they were all athletic looking young men and wearing rubber soled boots. He also saw that they were heavily armed and were patrolling as a brick of the British army. How he knew this was from the days he had served with the Irish Army and had completed a United Nations tour of duty with the British Army. It was his military training that had helped him become the commander of the Provisional Army unit operating in the police Sub Division.

Too late to turn, he was pulled into the side of the road and questioned politely by a young RUC Constable. He produced his driving documents and while the Constable was examining them he was studying the members of the patrol. Suddenly an older officer with pale blue eyes took up his attention. This officer was paying quite a lot of attention to O'Farrell. This officer appeared lean and athletic, no office pen pusher this thought O'Farrell this was a field officer of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the young men were not ordinary police constables. This was a crack anti terrorist unit of the RUC. He got the feeling that someone had just walked all over his grave. The Constable handed back the documents and beckoned O'Farrell to move on, as he drove off he could still feel the eyes of the older man piercing into the back of his neck.

Doyle had watched O'Farrell scrutinise the patrol while waiting for his driving documents to be returned to him by the Constable. He thought, here is someone who is keen to know what the police are doing. He made a note to check on the man who reminded him of a badger, owing to the grey streaks that appeared on each side of

his curly black hair. Experience had taught Doyle that it wasn't a casual inquisitive glance that this man had given to the patrol. Worth taking a closer look at him and in the long term build a picture of the man.

## **The Queen's Writ is established**

Things around the village started to settle down. The police had started with the usual road clearance. The villagers were happy to use the roads that the police had cleared for explosives. Other patrols they undertook were on foot and during the hours of daylight. This suited the Provies, who although not engaging in any nefarious goings on were able again to avail of Mulligan's hospitality of an evening. The highlight of this was the happy hour when Mulligan provided double whiskies for the price of a single. This in turn was good business as it did away with the poteen posing as whiskey. The added attraction was that the happy hour lasted more than an hour. Thus the till of Mulligan was again busting at the seams and Mrs Mulligan a lot nearer to acquiring her new winter coat. It also solved the porter situation for he also dispensed pints of porter for the price of a bottle. During this liberal period there was many a volunteer suffering greatly the next day with a very big headache, due to overindulgence the night before.

The thing that pleased O'Farrell about the situation was the fact of Mulligan's generosity with the drink meant that he would need replenished quite soon with more poteen. He never thought for a minute that the reason Mulligan was disposing of all the illicit liquor was in case the police took an unwelcome interest in him. There appeared no need to worry about the other pies that he had a hand in just at the moment and as long as the Army council was involved with trouble elsewhere in the county he was quite content to let things move along as they were.

During this period the police had been confining their operations to daylight and the clearing of roads from explosive devices. Doyle had, on more than one occasion, tried to get the Chief Inspector to agree to him taking a patrol through the village. Murphy was against this plan as a shrewd Fermanagh man he had taken the view that it was one thing to police the highways and maybe the byways, but the time was not right to police the village. The other

officer was bound to respect the wishes of the other more senior of the two.

There was however a big problem starting to arise. The police were now well established on the roads of the sub division and were starting to indulge in the usual practices of police forces everywhere. That was they were carrying out road stops and as well as asking motorists for their driving documents, they were engaged in asking about faulty tyres, no tax disks, dirty number plates, no goods vehicle licences, defective lights, and no hand brake to name but a few offences which came under the traffic regulations that had not been operated in the sub district in quite a while, and to which the majority of the locals had paid little or no attention .

This was the brainchild of Doyle, taking a lead hand in this and politely requesting the locals to produce the vehicles at the village police station within two weeks with the faults rectified or face prosecution and a visit to the local petty sessions. Doyle had anticipated the locals taking this to the Provisionals who he knew from experience had warned the locals not to talk to the police.

It worked, for among the locals to complain to O'Farrell about the actions of the police was one cattle smuggler we shall call, for obvious reasons, Smyth. That not being his real name but as there are more Provies in that part of Co Tyrone than smugglers he could be easily identified. Smyth's smuggling racket had been one of the pies that O'Farrell had his finger in. He was not only charging a fee to Smyth for ensuring safe passage and free from police patrols through his area, but other volunteers in the hill farm were making money by keeping the beasts until the subsidy was paid from the government for them and they were once again transported down south of the border.

The previous month Smyth nearly ran into a police foot patrol some miles from the village and this was at 10pm. Good fortune prevailed as he was turning to his right anyway onto a byroad therefore avoiding being stopped by the police having a load of smuggled cattle aboard and being stopped by the RUC didn't bear

thinking about. He reckoned what saved him was the police were on foot and had no vehicle present. If they had they no doubt would have followed and stopped him, soon cottoning on the cattle were smuggled and costing him both his load and the lorry.

Smyth told Seamus that he was not going to pay out any gratuities until the police had other things to occupy their time and only when the roads were safe to smuggle cattle on. O'Farrell was beginning to see that some of his perks were about to disappear if the police were going to carry out patrols and do road stops at night. O'Farrell had been told this at Mulligan's where he had stopped in for a drink. The other thing was that although Mulligan had been having happy hours he had not requested Seamus to supply more of the mountain dew.

The next day things took a turn for the worse; Shamus's father O'Farrell senior had paid him a visit saying that he had been stopped by the police on the mountain road on his way to the village. He told his son that a police officer with very blue eyes had checked his vehicle and told him that he would have to buy two new tyres. This officer also pointed out to Mr O'Farrell Snr that his drivers licence was two years out of date. He advised him to send to Coleraine for a new one and said there would be no more about it if Mr O'Farrell would kindly produce the new licence along with his car with new tyres fitted in two weeks at the village police station. This news gave Seamus a bit of a shock as he had quite a lot of poteen concealed in an outhouse on his father's hill farm on the side of the Sperrins.

Later that day in the company of Flynn and Megaw, Seamus transferred the bottles of illicit spirit from the outhouse on his father's farm to a hurried dug out in the bank of a field on the periphery of the farmyard. His father had gone to the village and would be none the wiser about the poteen concealed on his land. If the police happened by and decided as their want was to search the farmyard they would not find the illicit drink. One bottle was kept out which O'Farrell handed round between him and the other two volunteers. Happy that a catastrophe had been avoided they went home. O'Farrell was beginning to see the light, he had just realised

that Mulligan wouldn't be purchasing any of the mountain dew for quite some time. Here was another of his enterprises cut short by the now daily appearance of the Royal Ulster Constabulary on not only the highways but also the by ways, something had to be done. Smyth the smuggler had not been the only one to complain about the police. The volunteers living on hill farms were starting to complain about the smuggled cattle on their land and wished to know when Smyth was going to remove them.

There had been no IRA outrages in the sub division since the police had arrived. This was because of two factors; one was that the volunteers, most of whom were farmers or farm labourers, had to get in the harvest. The second was that neither O'Farrell nor his merry men relished the thought of taking these police men on in a fire fight. It was one thing intimidating a part time UDR soldier of part time RUC Reserve constable in their isolated homes quite a different matter to come up against a well trained well armed police patrol, particularly if the aforementioned police remembered atrocities carried out to their colleagues by other Active Service Units of the Provisional IRA. The consequences didn't bear thinking about.

*In the Horns of a Dilemma*





## **Chapter 2**

### **The Liquor Licensing Laws enforced**

The police had been patrolling all the roads leading from the village and always in an outward direction from the station. Doyle however decided to venture more towards the other villages at the far flung ends of his sub division. The entire road had been well policed and allowed them the luxury of travelling by vehicle and not always be on foot. As it was his custom to police in a more unorthodox way he never made it regular patrolling rather more when the notion took him. The route from the police station was never the same and he had now taken to leaving the station with a patrol in vehicles before first light along one road. Then the patrol would start back on foot along another road carrying out road stops at short intervals as they went. This was most disconcerting to the locals and terrorists alike as they were never sure when they would happen on a police patrol either coming or going to the police station. Doyle however hadn't got to do an actual patrol of the village as Murphy the Chief Inspector wouldn't agree to it.

During one of these patrols Doyle got his first crack at some local ordinary crime. The patrol had been left to a cross road near the end of the sub division and to the south of the village. It was mid afternoon and the intention was to patrol the by roads in this area until tea time. This would enable the police to make new acquaintances returning home from collecting children from school and others travelling home from work by car. This was also enlarging the local knowledge of the officers.

They had been on the roads for about two hours, nothing unusual had occurred and Doyle ordered the men to take a break. The tail end Charlie and the point man had been put in place. The rest spread themselves out in a small copse of trees. They were cautioned by Doyle to place wrappers of chocolate, cigarette butts and papers etc in their haversacks and not to leave them lying around. This was important for empty cigarette packets, butts and coke cans were a dead giveaway that the police had taken a break in that place. The next time they were on this road the Pira might

have left a booby trap bomb as a welcome present. The one thing Doyle didn't want was any of his men injured.

After they had rested and just about to move off, the young constable who had been doing point spoke to Doyle. He told him that he had seen a strange happening; it was a large goose in the field where he was keeping watch. The bird was going round and round in circles with one of its wings trailing the ground. This young man being a native of Belfast took some kindly banter from the rest of the patrol to the effect that what did a townie know of the ways of the country. The road they were on was a narrow mountain road leading past a small farm, two miles further on was one of the villages that lay at the foothills of the Sperrin Mountains.

Doyle figured that the farm fell within his sub division although the village would have been outside his jurisdiction. He made a decision to search the outbuildings and surrounding fields on the off chance of finding something of interest.

On entering the farmyard he was surprised to see the collie dog stretched out in the afternoon sun and not paying the slightest attention to the party of police. This was unusual as this type of little dog was territorial and would bark at anyone or anything invading his territory. He asked his men to start searching and knocked on the door which was opened by an elderly man who Doyle recognised. This was O'Farrell Snr who invited Doyle inside and showed him to a chair. The elderly gentlemen told Doyle that he had got both his licence and the tyres changed, and was about to go to the police station and show them to the police. Doyle assured Mr O'Farrell that it was all right, if his documents were in order and the tyres replaced he didn't have to go to the police station that he would mark it off as complied with. He told Mr Farrell he and his men were doing a quick search of outhouses and the fields close by if he didn't mind. Mr O'Farrell gave his assurance that everything was all right and for the search to go ahead. He asked Doyle if he cared for a cup of tea, to which Doyle agreed. The two men talked over a cup of tea of times that had passed. They chatted of the game that was to be found in the glen

and of the salmon to be found in the local river. O'Farrell Snr told Doyle that since business men had taken over the shooting rights in the seventies the glen had become void of pheasants. According to O'Farrell the river had been losing salmon due to a mysterious infection and also fishing rites had been sold off to clubs from the town.

Their reminiscing was interrupted by a young constable knocking on the door. Doyle thanked his host for the tea and went outside to see what was amiss. The constable took him to a dyke in a field bordering the lane to the farmyard where a little brook ran alongside finishing up in a sort of duck pond at the bottom of the field.

There the reason for the behaviour of the goose and that of the dog was plain for all to see. The Sergeant had when searching that part of the field had observed fresh cut sods which appeared to be covering a freshly dug piece of earth in the grass bank. The Sergeant had despatched one of the constables to locate a spade and then they commenced to lift off the sods and gingerly move back the soft earth. There it was low and behold a sight for sore eyes, about at least thirty bottles of poteen, give or take the two or three that had broken. This had evidently been the cause of the dog and goose acting strangely, both had drunk from the pond into which the illicit spirit had seeped through the breakage and both were three sheets in the wind.

This left Doyle no choice but to call in with Mr O'Farrell and convey to him the news of the find. When he broke the news to O'Farrell he knew by the look on his face that he was telling the truth earlier when he said that there was nothing to find on his land. He knew that it must have been others wiler than the elderly gentleman who had hidden the booze there, but the question was who was the person or persons involved.

Search as they might they didn't find either the still or the worm anywhere on the farm. This convinced Doyle that the spirit had been distilled elsewhere and the drink hidden there for safe keeping. He took his leave of Mr O'Farrell telling him he was convinced he had nothing to do with the illicit distillation but that

he was seizing the bottles for destruction. The police radioed for a vehicle to collect them and the contraband and bring all back to the police station.

Although O'Farrell Snr couldn't be absolutely sure who was behind the potteen making he could hazard a good guess that it wouldn't be beyond the capabilities of his son.

## **The Sinn Fein Political Rally**

When Seamus O'Farrell had finished listening to his father's tale of how the police had searched his farm outbuildings and fields close to the farm house and discovered the poteen he nearly got his rifle and declared war on the police himself. However not to show his hand to his father he made as if the discovery of the poteen came a total surprise, even going so far as to ask his father if he had been involved with the mountain men in the making of poteen. After the old man had protested his innocence and told Seamus that even the pleasant RUC officer hadn't thought him guilty, how could his own son think that he might have been involved. Seamus dodged the answer to this question and after his father left he began to consider his next move.

The seizure of the mountain dew and the stopping of the smuggling of beasts, not to mention Mulligan not taking any more illicit spirits to sell in his pub, meant that O'Farrell's pockets would be a lot lighter. He was no mug and an assault on either a foot patrol of police or an attack on the station was out of the question. Maybe some of the more volatile young Provies from villages further up the mountain could be talked into ambushing a patrol of police, but he wasn't prepared to go down that road. The aftermath would mean that the village and surrounding area would be awash with strange police also British Military and even a squadron of \*SAS. No thanks that would mean he wouldn't be able to turn a penny in his pocket without the police knowing about it. Times were bad but not that bad.

The more he thought the more he went round in circles. Then it struck him, why not get his political masters in Sinn Fein to take a hand in resolving this matter. The next morning he collected Flynn and they set off to pay a visit to Sean McGovern who was a Sinn Fein Councillor on the local Council and who had aspirations to become an N.I M.P at Stormont when the time was right. O'Farrell didn't much care for McGovern as both had been

volunteers in the same ASU, but when the going got hot McGovern opted for the safer route. He had been selected as election agent for the Sinn Fein candidate who was standing for Westminster, but who wouldn't take his seat in the house when elected. O'Farrell couldn't understand this reluctance to represent the electorate. He thought he was fighting this war to establish Sinn Fein in office.

However he was only a foot soldier what did he know of the intricate workings of the political mind. When they arrived at the house they were shown to the drawing room by Mrs McGovern. A short while later they were joined by a tall slim round shouldered man in his late thirties wearing a pair of gold rimmed spectacles. McGovern recognised the two men immediately; he thought this visit could only mean trouble. He quickly came to the point and asked why they had come. O'Farrell not wanting to outstay his welcome came straight to the point. He told McGovern of what had happened and stated that this state of affairs could not continue. The politician played it cool and told them that if the volunteers were powerless to do anything to stop the police gaining a hold on the community, he couldn't possibly see what he could do.

The Provisional commander wasn't really surprised by the reluctance on the politicians' part to take a hand in rabble rousing. This was typical of most politicians, to wash their hands of a serious situation and pass the buck however O'Farrell wasn't to be deterred. After pointing out to McGovern that most of the volunteers being farmers or farm labourers were busy bringing in the harvest. That the police who were in the police station were well armed and thus making the volunteers reluctant to take them on in fire fights. It was about time McGovern and Sinn Fein started to do something positive about removing the police, or at least hindering them in some way.

The politician had suspected for quite some time that O'Farrell and his merry men had been engaged in some shady business deals which he assumed put more money in their own pockets than went

into the war chest of Sinn Fein. He didn't particularly like O'Farrell, but knew that he commanded quite a bit of loyalty from the villagers. He also was aware that if he didn't do something, he could find himself ousted at the next local council election. Standing against him no doubt would be Barry Flynn who, with O'Farrell's backing and the rest of the Provisionals, would be elected. If this happened he could kiss goodbye to becoming a Stormont MP.

After some deliberation he agreed to O'Farrell's plan of holding a political meeting in the village. He told O'Farrell and Flynn he would endeavour to get the local Westminster MP to come and speak at the meeting against the Royal Ulster Constabulary and their unfair harassment of the law abiding villagers. McGovern had some misgivings about this as he knew quite well the volunteers and locals attending would first fortify themselves with drink. The speeches would enrage the crowd and they would take it out on the police station, causing a mini riot. He knew too that the police would defend themselves and send forth a volley of rubber bullets injuring some of the crowd. On reflection this might be good copy for the newspapers and television and help further the aims and objectives of Sinn Fein. The date was arranged and McGovern said he would take charge of the publicity for the rally. Now McGovern made the arrangements for posters, flyers etc for the rally over the phone. It is common knowledge that the telephone exchanges in County Tyrone leaked like sieves and it was not long before everyone including the police knew of the forthcoming rally in the village. This was long in advance of any posters being distributed; Sinn Fein could have saved some money and let the news be conveyed by the jungle telegraph.

Chief Inspector Murphy and Doyle heard the news and held a council of war with the Sergeants. It was agreed that no patrols would be sent out on the evening of the rally and that Murphy would arrange for extra police cover from the town if need be to render assistance. The evening of the rally drew night, Mulligan was having second thoughts about not obtaining more poteen from O'Farrell as his pub was fast filling up to the doors with every Tom Dick and Harry for miles around. The other public house in

the village was also crammed to capacity, everyone keen to hear what the Sinn Fein MP had to say and it is well known that Tyrone folk like to go out and enjoy a bit of crack and a drink. This meeting was indeed such a place to meet folk, have a drink and a bit of crack.

When the MP arrived in the company of McGovern, the crowd started to leave the pubs and congregate in the village square. The meeting started with a few well chosen words from Sean McGovern who then introduced the Member of Parliament for the area. The politician wasted no time in slandering the police and urging the crowd to not tolerate the harassment of the police and to let them know in no uncertain terms that they the people would not stand for it. This brought a roar of agreement from the crowd. Whether or not it was the lack of a police presence at the rally it appeared that

the shout of agreement was all that there was going to be. The rain started and the crowds' dispersed in the direction of the two pubs. The local volunteers to drown their sorrows as the rally appeared to be a damp squib. The locals to discuss what had been said in the speeches and how this was going to achieve an all Ireland, all of which meant in the foreseeable future if this were to occur; there would be more police on duty dealing with ordinary every day offences, no volunteers and more politicians telling folk what to do. The Provisional volunteers gathered round the fire listening to the remarks weren't to pleased with the remark no more volunteers. Later the locals took their leave of Mulligan having decided that it was better to keep the Royal Ulster Constabulary whom they knew, than to inherit a completely new police force. In other words better the devil you know than the one you don't. The volunteers with O'Farrell stayed on, as the whiskey tasted better than ever. This was due to Mulligan running down his store of the mountain dew and having to supply the likes of Black Bush and the Grouse whiskey to his customers, who appeared to be enjoying it. O'Farrell and Flynn mulled over the evenings events, not much had been achieved. The police were still there large as life, the general public appearing to have accepted the fact. O'Farrell thought, as he had his worm and still well hidden in a disused farm higher up in the Sperrins, he decided



that he would distil more of the illicit spirit and off load it to the publicans in the other villages. Things were bound to improve, with this thought he and the other volunteers took their leave of Mulligan who went off to bed a happy man.

Meanwhile back at the police station Murphy and Doyle breathed a sigh of relief. Both men knew if hardy came to hardy they would if the station came under attack have to resort to the use of the new rubber bullets to defend themselves. This they would not hesitate to do, but both were glad that the crowd had dispersed and the threat was averted. Murphy produced a half bottle of Johnny Walker Black label from the depths of his desk he then placed two glasses on the desk and asked Doyle to join him in a drink. Doyle accepted but ribbed his friend about the whiskey, asking how he had whiskey in a dry station. Murphy replied that it was for medicinal purposes only and as he had aged a year that evening he thought he was due a nip. Both men raised their glasses in a toast to a successful ending to the day and retired for the night.

\*SAS Special Air Services

*Sinn Féin Politacal Rally*



*Gacho*

## **Return to the Concrete Jungle**

It was time for Doyle to take leave of his colleagues and for him and Letson to return to their HQ in Belfast. The relief party had arrived and he was greeted by a voice he recognised asking if he was staying for a bit longer. He turned to see another friend Chief Inspector Brian Macomb, the chief was about the same age as Doyle looked athletic and in good shape. He replied he was off back to the concrete jungle; both men had served in Belfast, Macomb in the CID. The chief got the parting shot saying that if he had anything to do with it Doyle would be back.

Once back in the city Doyle again returned to the training of the new members of the Unit. He was only too aware that his training methods had to be up to scratch if he were to train these young officers to be experts in their field. They had to be fully armed with the knowledge that would keep them alive in any given situation they found themselves in. This was no easy task he had set himself and he always gave it one hundred and fifty percent of his endeavour. He never asked a man to do anything he would or could not accomplish himself, and always led from the front.

There was always a request from one of the four divisions for his aid with search procedures. Belfast was divided into four police divisions covering North Belfast, where the population were divided into two sections Nationalists on one side of the divide and Protestants on the other. The troubles had pushed the communities' poles apart and both distrusted each other. This was the difficult situation that the RUC found them selves in. The same criteria applied in West Belfast, the two communities were separated by a Berlin type wall. This wall is referred to as the peace line. South and East Belfast although not physically divided were not able to trust each other.

The sudden and violent change in the inhabitants of these loyalist and republican enclaves bothered Doyle. He had walked the beat

on his own in all of these areas in the early to mid sixties, drank tea in houses in all of the divisions, and conversed with the locals. Then when the troubles started in nineteen sixty nine he found himself pelted with bricks, pavers, gratings and petrol bombs by both sides of the community both of which he was doing his level best to protect he couldn't quite grasp why suddenly he and the rest of the Royal Ulster Constabulary weren't accepted in these areas.

In the early part of the seventies there came a demographic change in the movements of ordinary criminals. Doyle noted that the Protestant criminal was going through the wire into Nationalist areas to carry out breaking and entering; whereas the Nationalist criminal was crossing into the Protestant areas to carry out criminal acts. He had become aware of this phenomenon when following up burglaries in both areas. It had been confirmed some time later when Doyle happened to meet one Harry the mole who when asked about his movements, told Doyle he had given up crime as he didn't want shot by the peelers or army as being a terrorist. He said there was no longer any future in crime, it was too blooming dangerous.

This sadly was true for crime had now become political. It was terrorists who were holding up banks and off licences at the point of a gun. Doyle himself had, on checking an area, come on a bank raid. He had tried to apprehend the terrorists who were involved but as he was on his own and unarmed he failed. However he managed to get descriptions and the registration number of the car. Later he was instrumental in helping to put them behind bars. Thankfully for Doyle the terrorists were more worried about getting out of the way of this persistent and foolhardy policeman than shooting him and concentrated on making their getaway.

He still tried to keep up with watching out for and trying to outwit the gunmen who were lining their pockets with ill gotten gains. He had firmly been convinced that in the early part of the troubles that the official IRA had been doing hold ups to gain the where with all to buy arms and ammunition. Now in the eighties he was equally convinced that the Provies and Loyalists were lining their own pockets with the cash.

With more specialised police units like his being formed and more and more of the terrorists from both camps being caught red handed there came an insidious change to the face of crime in the city. Both terrorist camps had taken to protection rackets at building sites all over Belfast. Builders in both loyalist enclaves and republican enclaves found themselves held to ransom. This was a harder type of crime to get to the bottom of as the builders were frightened to say anything to the police for fear of harm befalling them or their families. The protection racket had been also in full swing with the intimidation of shopkeepers and business men in both areas. These crimes would have to be dealt with by the setting up of a specialist unit containing officers from other units similar to that of Doyle's.

There was another aspect of crime that both paramilitary groupings were saying quite loudly they had no hand in and that was the supply of hard drugs. They even went as far as to say anyone supplying or using drugs in their areas would be dealt with quite severely. Doyle on the other hand wasn't convinced that the paramilitaries were as squeaky clean as they would like folk to think. He was convinced but had no proof as yet that they were involved up to the neck in drug peddling. This was the changing face of Belfast. In times gone past both communities who lived then cheek to jowl used to help each out in time of trouble. If a Protestant woman's husband became ill and out of work her Catholic neighbour would lend a hand by supplying a pot of soup or other source of food to the family and vice versa they looked out for each other. Sadly this was no longer the case and it saddened Doyle to think about it. He remembered one night when on patrol with some colleagues, it was about 2am in the morning, a man came running towards them in a distraught state. The police stopped their vehicle and enquired what was wrong. The man blurted out that one of his children was unwell and he was trying to get to a phone to ring for a doctor. The other police radioed for a call out doctor to come and examine the child. Doyle went into the house with the distraught parent and saw a small boy lying on the settee in the living room. The boy was very warm and Doyle

thought that the child may have taken the measles. He obtained a dish of tepid water and a face flannel and started to sponge the child down. This appeared to help as the little boy became less agitated and his parents more reassured that he was improving.

The doctor arrived and confirmed that the child had indeed been infected by measles. The parents thanked the police for their help and Doyle and his colleagues resumed their patrol. One other night he and a colleague when coming back into the city from investigating a burglary, came upon a vehicle stopped in Corporation Street.

The doors of the car were open and two ladies inside appeared to be quite distressed. Doyle soon learned that one of the ladies was in an advanced state of labour and her friend who had been taking her to the Royal Victoria Hospital in the car had lost her way. He could see from the state of both ladies that the driver was in no state to continue driving the car. He asked his colleague to radio to the hospital and say that an expectant mother was on the way to the hospital, with that he drove the lady's car to the hospital while his colleague followed in their vehicle.

This was one aspect of police work that Doyle liked, helping people; it wasn't always about chasing criminals or terrorists but occasionally you got to help people in an everyday sort of fashion. It brought to mind that sometimes looks can be deceiving. He was checking out a road in the south of the city, things had been very quiet of late and he had the uncanny feeling that something was about to happen. When he got a hunch about something he tried to follow it through, as sometimes his hunches paid dividends. He had stopped at the corner of a street in which there was a tyre depot, as he was in civilian clothes he pulled out a pack of cigarettes and lit one. It was then he noticed a Ford car with two men in it turned into the street; as the car passed Doyle noticed that the driver was paying some attention to him. This car turned into the tyre depot and a short time later the two men appeared and started walking towards Doyle. He had to think quickly. Were these two terrorists leaving a car bomb in the depot, were they just customers?. Had they recognised him as a police officer? He

transferred his Walther pistol from its holster to his coat pocket and released the safety catch.

The two men approached him he kept close watch on their hands and waited for the tell tale sign of them reaching inside their jackets for a firearm. The men made no such move and as they drew closer one said 'Mr Doyle do you remember me?'. Doyle was at a loss; he vaguely remembered the face but couldn't put a name to it. 'I'm Jim McCracken' said the young man; 'you caught me doing a burglary.' The memory of the burglary came flooding back; it was some time ago he had apprehended the youth for breaking into a pub. 'Good to see you' replied Doyle 'I hope you are doing well and how is your mother?' 'Doing very well' replied the youth 'I never got to thank you for looking after her the day of the court. You and I knew I had carried out the burglary but you didn't say to my mother, not even when the jury disagreed and I was let off'.

'That's all right' said Doyle 'I hope you learned your lesson'. With that Jim McCracken produced a pay slip and showed it to Doyle saying 'look at that, I have a good job now thanks to you and have earned enough money to support my mother and buy this car and put tyres on it. If you hadn't have caught me I might now be in prison'. With that the two men departed, on leaving Jim McCracken said to Doyle. 'I don't think you police deserve the things people are saying about you. I think you are fair minded and support you one hundred percent'. This remark from the young man made Doyle's day. It helped make up for all the bricks, pavers and gratings that were thrown at him in the early years of the troubles.

## **The return of the persistent Peeler**

Doyle had just completed the refresher training of the young officers in his unit. Winter was starting to set in, there would be no more training courses until the springtime and the thought of patrolling the concrete jungle that was the capital city of Northern Ireland appeared bleak. The troubles as this terrorist campaign was now called had put a dampener on Christmas Festivities in the centre of the city. Some of the hotels and licensed premises would do their best to ensure that their patrons would have a good time over the festive season.

The trouble was that the fear of a car bomb in the city centre in the run up to Christmas would most surely keep the shoppers and revellers alike out of the city. This meant that Doyle and his colleagues would have no Christmas leave again this year. They would be patrolling the dark windswept streets trying to outwit the terrorist and keep the population safe from harm. Doyle shivered; the car bomb was an evil emissary of death and destruction, if not detected and dealt with it caused many deaths and terrible injuries to innocent citizens just going about their lawful business. He had always thought that the warnings given by the terrorist groups were too short and the type and colour of the vehicle unreliable, not to mention the inaccuracy of the location. This lack of correct information made the task of locating and disarming the vehicle near to impossible never mind the clearing of the immediate area of the public.

The bomb was a much favoured means of the terrorist of dispatching both Police Army and innocent bystanders with little or no risk to themselves. The bomb however is no respecter of people or places. This fact has become painfully aware to terrorists, some of whom have been blown up by their own bombs, either while on route to a location or while engaged in the making of them. They have been unaware of the volatility and unstable nature of the explosives or of the inaccuracy of the timing devices they were using, but sadly they never learn. Doyle often thought if



the terrorist knew that if he was caught he would have to disarm his own bomb, how many of them would be as keen to place one.

It was 1.00pm when he arrived back at his office; he had been at a briefing in the city centre police headquarters about arrangements for the Christmas shopping period.

Joyce his able Personal Assistant told him that the Superintendent was anxious to see him. He decided to go the canteen first and have some lunch. After lunch he made his way to Hanrahan's office. The Superintendent was sitting at his desk smoking a cigar. 'You finally arrived then' barked Hanrahan, beckoning Doyle to a seat. He told Doyle that Brian Macomb had been on the phone asking that he return to Tyrone as his skills were required there. Doyle asked when he was to go, to which he was told 'the sooner the better'. The Superintendent said that he was to take John Deacon with him for support. Doyle liked Deacon; the two men had worked well together and had undergone training together some years before. He was pleased with the choice of colleague.

Now Doyle remembered the Tyrone winters of his youth, the heavy snowfalls and chilling frosts. The winters were especially hard in this area of the foothills of the Sperrin mountains. Farmers had especially very gruelling times, trying to battle against the elements and keep body and soul together until the springtime and the lambing season. Given a choice though he would probably rather spend a winter in the clear fresh air of his native Tyrone than in the damp fog filled city centre of Belfast. Early the next morning the two officers set off to do a tour of duty away from home. This time thought Doyle we are going to the village by daylight; he couldn't help wondering if the accommodation had improved since his last visit.

They were met at the police station by Superintendent Macomb, who welcomed Doyle like a long lost brother, 'so you're the cause of me being here' said Doyle in a friendly manner, 'what's afoot?' The Superintendent told the two officers that he wasn't able to get full time specialist officers attached to his sub division until the springtime and that was why he had requested Doyle to come back and do another tour of duty. Doyle asked was that the truth or had

Macomb no chess opponent worth his metal among the party? The Superintendent told Doyle he would take him on at chess anytime, and what's more he would win.

The Superintendent showed them to their office come bedroom; it was a touring caravan belonging to the Super, parked in the station yard. 'Surely you jest' Doyle said to Macomb. The Superintendent replied that he thought it would be more comfortable than sleeping on a couple of \*biscuits on the floor. He told the two officers that accommodation was at a premium. 'What if there is a mortar attack' said Doyle 'we will have to reinforce a wall round the caravan, in other words build it into a walled unit for safety.' Macomb said that this would be complied with and left Doyle and Deacon to settle in. The caravan was quite self contained unit and John soon found the kettle and crockery and had a cup of tea ready in no time. After tea both officers went and inspected the security arrangements, things had improved a lot since Doyle was last here. The station was beginning to look like a permanent fixture. Doyle hoped it would be a mild winter as any other sort was quite hard on both man and beast.

Seamus O'Farrell was also thinking of the oncoming winter. The harvest had been gathered in, Harvest Thanksgiving had been said in the local chapel and church for a good harvest, and though O'Farrell hadn't gone to give thanks he was glad for the farmers that the harvest was good. He had given up going to church for quite a while as the sermons Father Ted gave from the pulpit didn't quite agree with the philosophy of the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and if he had been a practising catholic he would have to confess his sins, which the priest might think were many even if O'Farrell didn't. Best then thought Seamus not to bother the father and to get on with the fight to free Ireland. The volunteers of yester year now resting in the eternal sleep might wonder what O'Farrell thought he was doing as they thought they had accomplished the freedom of Ireland when it was partitioned in 1922 when Michael Collins went to Downing Street to sign the Treaty with the other members of the Provisional Parliament while Eamon De Valera had to leg it to the USA on official business. Alas and alack some have other ideas and so the conflict goes on.

De Valera must have been the shrewdest politician Ireland ever spawned. As signing the Treaty cost Michael Collins his life.

\*a biscuit was a small square mattress stuffed with horse hair and covered with Hessian type material.

It took three of these to cover a six foot single iron bed.

Please God let me beat Charlie  
Stewart at the Chess game tonight

Is that you  
Ted? Ready  
for the defeat?



## **The peculiar affair of the strange Cattle**

Doyle was pleased to see that Brian Macomb had done his homework well, the police cars in the station yard were identical to the foreign makes seen on the roads of Tyrone. This even included the registration bearing County Tyrone number plates, he himself had long since thought it was time to merge into the community, thus taking the edge of surprise away from the terrorist.

The two specialist officers had carried out a patrol with the local police in the afternoon. That evening saw Doyle and Macomb driving out of the station in one of the unmarked foreign cars and heading for a briefing at the police HQ in the town. At the briefing it was generally thought that although quiet of late the Provisionals were probably planning a winter offensive. The divisional commander left no one in doubt that he expects a pool of information collated by special branch and every station in the division to be on the alert.

On their return Macomb challenged Doyle to a game of chess to which Doyle agreed. The two officers made themselves comfortable in the kitchen area of the station in which there was a large log fire burning. Doyle lit a cigarette and offered one to Brian Macomb; he then opened the game with moving the Queen's pawn. The Superintendent followed suit, Doyle knew that the Super was no slouch when it came to playing chess. The game progressed; by this time it had gained an audience of some Sergeants and Constables who had just finished duty. Doyle in his usual manner had taken a few calculated risks and had as soon as possible got both his Knights into play. This rather unorthodox move seemed to upset the Super's train of thought, he unlike Doyle was a more defensive player and weighed up the pros and cons more than the other man. So the game went on well into the small hours Doyle had managed to check the Super on a number of occasions but finally he walked straight into a check mate.

Before turning in he went outside lit a cigarette and went to talk to the young officers manning the look out posts. He told them that they were the eyes and the ears of the station; it was only through their alertness that he could feel safe to sleep. Remembering the briefing he said to them if they saw or heard anything during the hours of darkness no matter what time they were to come and waken him. With that he made his way to the caravan and to bed. The next morning after breakfast and shaving this time in hot water he went to the briefing room. There he saw the Superintendent studying an ordinance survey map of the sub division. He told the Super that there was one of the young officers a cartographer and it might be a good idea to get him to do a map of the sub division similar to the maps that were framed in stations in his youth. Paying attention in detail to the village and completing an update of the houses in the village.

Macomb knew what Doyle was after he reckoned that he wanted to patrol the village and make the police presence felt. He told Doyle he would think about it. Later that afternoon Doyle and Deacon set out with a party of police heading north out from the village along a main arterial road. There was little or no traffic on this road, which Doyle thought strange for the time of the afternoon. They had gone about two miles when Doyle requested that they turn off onto a by road and continue North West of the Village. The police then crossed a small bog and after working their way through a copse of trees they came out onto a main road west of the village and started to carry out a road stop. Liam Megaw had finished early that day and was wending his way homeward when he was waved down by a local farmer who told him to go west of the village as he had seen police north of the village and if he kept on he would surely bump into them. Liam thanked the farmer for the tip off and switched roads. He hadn't gone more than three miles west of the village when he came upon a police patrol coming towards him. Patrick when stopped recognised one of the police officers as the tall one with the piercing blue eyes he had come across a few months before. He groaned under his breath as this officer approached. Doyle too had recognised the mousey haired man and knew him to be Liam Megaw a member of the local ASU. 'How are you doing?' said Doyle, Liam didn't answer him. 'I see

you have a faulty exhaust, and also a tyre on the nearside front wheel needs changed. May I see your driving documents?’ With this Megaw had no choice but to produce the documents breathing a sigh of relief when they were returned. ‘Make sure you get the exhaust fixed and tyre replaced; report to me at the local police station within a fortnight to have the faults inspected’ said Doyle.

Once released by the police Megaw wasted no time in going to Seamus O’Farrell’s where he related what he had seen, adding that there must be a lot more police in the village than first thought as there appeared to be a patrol both north and west of the village. What’s more he told O’Farrell he had seen that nosey peeler with the blue eyes back again and patrolling the road west of the village. This last bit of news came as a shock as O’Farrell was still smarting from the loss of the poteen which had been confiscated by the fore mentioned police officer, the one his father thought was a decent man. Moreover when he discovered that the party at the police station was changing over he had decided to make hay when the sun shone and the new police were familiarising themselves with the district. His still was producing the mountain dew which he was not only supplying to the landlords in the other villages but Mulligan had seen fit to stock up again with poteen. Smith the cattle smuggler had once again been able to move cattle freely within the sub division and the volunteers were making a bob or two by keeping the beasts on their hill farms and claiming the subsidy. Everything in the garden seemed rosy, that is until now, O’Farrell had thought he had seen the last of the nosey RUC Officer when the change over had taken place and he had appeared to have gone back to whence he came. Not so it appeared that the same officer was back large as life to haunt him, if the past was anything to go by it wouldn’t be long before he was poking his nose in where it wasn’t wanted.

Doyle along with the Superintendent had decided to patrol by vehicle at night as they now had cars which resembled the ones used by the local populace. It was while on one of these patrols that a strange happening occurred. The police had perfected a method of using the two cars as an obstacle when carrying out a road stop. The lead car would pull across the road to the right

while the following car would pull across the road to the left about three car lengths apart. This meant that any motorist trying to run the road stop would have a hard time trying to negotiate the two cars without crashing into them. The road stop had just been set up and the police had taken up defensive positions on both sides of the road when a lorry approached from the rear with only its side lights showing. Doyle was immediately suspicious of the vehicle; suddenly the lorry came to an abrupt halt, backed down the road and turned off onto a minor road to the right. The lorry contained smuggled cattle the driver of which was none other than Smyth. He had spotted the police cars parked across the road and acted immediately to avoid capture. Putting the cars across the road may have been a good idea at the time to deter motorists from trying to drive through the police road stop, but now they were a hindrance to the police when they were trying to give chase to the lorry which was now travelling along the minor road away from them at a fast speed. Doyle knew that they would soon overtake the lorry and wasn't over worried about the delay in giving chase. However Smyth had come to the same conclusion and knew that it was only a matter of time before he and his illegal cargo were caught and he lost both lorry and cattle.

Smyth cursed O'Farrell for not fore warning him of the police presence at night on the roads. He thought cute move using foreign makes of cars with no markings to harass law abiding citizens only out to make a bob or two without having to pay excise duty on his ill gotten gains. He saw the headlights of the police vehicles in his rear view mirror. They had just turned into the minor road, he made a snap decision, put out his lights, drove forward some more, then stopped ran to the rear of the vehicle and dropped the tailgate. He unloaded the cattle onto the road, closed the tail gate and drove off down the road without lights until he came to a crossroads, where he considered it safe to put on his full lights and drive homeward. Meanwhile the two police cars were speeding along the minor road in pursuit of the lorry, suddenly rounding a corner the headlights of the lead car picked out something large and black with green eyes on the road. The car skidded to a stop, the driver doing a good job of avoiding the startled beast in the middle of the road. The second vehicle saw



the stop lights of the car in front and the driver slammed on the brakes narrowly missing the rear of the front car.

Doyle swore under his breath, this was all he needed, remembering from the days of his youth how hard it was to herd animals along a road in the dark. He once had to capture a horse when on a bicycle patrol, borrow a halter from a farmer and lead the animal to safety. The young Constables were soon out of their vehicles, Doyle sent a couple of officers past the beasts via the fields to find an empty field with a gate leading to the road. When they had located the field they were to stay on the road and signal back by means of their torches and the other police would herd the cattle towards them and into the field. The plan worked well and soon the cattle were safe, but the problem wasn't yet solved. Doyle knew from experience that in scams like this the cattle were spirited away long before the police could pick them up with the correct transport.

In the old days it was easy to drive the cattle to the local police station and corral them in the station garden much to the annoyance of the local Sergeant who usually had it planted out in potatoes and vegetables to feed his family. Doyle looked at his watch it was just about 4am, he radioed to the station to have a relief party aroused and sent to his location which he gave as a map reference. It was well known that police radio frequencies were often listened into by criminals and amateur radio hams alike. He awaited the arrival of the other two police cars, lit a cigarette and settled down on a grass dyke, thinking of the time long past when a station like his was manned by four Constables and a Sergeant. It happened that in such a station the Sergeant was worried about the amount of cattle that were being smuggled across the border at night. His station was close to the border and he and his men had kept watch near the bridge over which the smugglers had to pass to gain access to the North, but in vain no matter at what time of night or for that matter what night no smugglers were caught.

Now it so happened that this Sergeant was in the habit of going across the border on more than one occasion to have a quiet drink with his counterpart in the South. The two old timers discussed the problem over a pint of porter, it was decided if Sergeant Brannigan

got a whiff of cattle being smuggled he would inform Sergeant Beattie by phone and a trap would be laid. The phone rang two weeks later and the trap was laid. One Constable offered to stay and look after the station while the Sergeant and the other three left for the bridge. They might have well stayed in their beds as no cattle crossed the border that night. On the way back to the station a young officer in the party made a remark that the back room light on the top floor of the station was shining brightly as there were no blinds pulled. Sergeant Beattie began to realise that the light from the station could be seen for miles around and when he got back he checked the past duty sheets to see who the men on the anti smuggling party were. On each of the occasions it appeared that the same Constable had offered to stay behind and look after the station.

Sergeant Beattie began to suspect that this officer was taking a bribe from the smugglers to warn them when the police were laying in wait; this was done by the signal from the rear window of the police station. If there was a light in the room it meant the police were out and about, if on the other hand the room was in darkness they were back into the station. The next time Sergeant Brannigan phoned his friend to let him know of the cattle to be smuggled, Sergeant Beattie waited to the last minute to arrange the welcoming party. Sure enough the same Constable offered to look after the station but the Sergeant was adamant that he should be part of the anti smuggling team. He had briefed another officer to keep the blind up in the rear room and the light on, instructing him that an hour later he was to pull the blind and extinguish the light. Sure enough Beattie saw the light of the station shining like a candle in the darkness, an hour later it went out and it was not long before he heard the sound of two lorries approaching the bridge from the South. It was a good capture two lorry loads of smuggled cattle. He and his men made the smugglers drive the lorries to the police station and deposit their load in the station garden. In those days the police couldn't seize the lorries, only the cattle could be confiscated.

The Constable admitted taking bribes and was transferred to Belfast under a cloud and his record showed that he would never

be considered for promotion. Doyle thought he had got off light. If he had anything to do with it the man would have been dismissed. It showed that smuggling was not considered a crime by either police or smugglers, more of a dishonest business venture. In today's world this would not be tolerated. If Doyle had been successful in apprehending the smuggler he would have had the power to seize the lorry as well as the cattle. He was aroused from his reminiscences by the sound of the other police vehicles approach. He was greeted by a bleary eyed Sergeant Paddy Sullivan who said 'what have you been up to and why have you got us out at this unearthly hour?' Paddy Sullivan had become used to being a station Sergeant and master of all he surveyed. He had rather unwisely assumed when Brian Macomb requested him to join the station party in the village that he would be housed nine to five in his office. This he discovered much to his annoyance was not the case when you had an officer of Doyle's calibre around, if you weren't careful and laid low you could find yourself out on an ambush patrol or in this case doing nursemaid to a few beasts. There was no chance of fobbing Doyle off with the excuse you were up to your neck in paper work, to Doyle a peeler was a peeler and should be out on the ground. Doyle was fond of the Sergeant who spoke his mind; Sullivan was a sound officer, one you would like to have by your side if things went a bit hairy. This applied to the younger Sergeants and Constables in the station; they all looked out for one another. Doyle was proud to serve along side them.

'Stop your complaining Sergeant I only want you to do a patrol and road stops on this road and keep an eye on the cattle until I can arrange suitable transport for them.' Sullivan muttered something about reduced to wet nursing cattle, but as Doyle departed he had the last word by saying, 'If I can't get them taken to the town Paddy you might have to enter them in the station store book and remember to note all the ear tags.' Paddy Sullivan scowled, he thinks he's a comedian, we'll see if he gets transport or not, with that he watched Doyle and his party drive off along the road.

Sergeant Sullivan had been right in his assumption about the availability of transport. Doyle had a hard enough task of locating

a farmer with a cattle truck to transport the cattle. He had to rely on the police in the HQ in the town to get transport and it was well into the morning before Sullivan and his party of police saw the back of the cattle. The Superintendent soon heard of the cattle capture and Doyle had to put up with some stick about when he was intending to do the patrols on horseback and lasso more cattle he thought were involved in criminal goings on.

The smuggler Smyth however was just glad he avoided capture and still had the use of his lorry. The loss of a few cattle was one thing but to lose his lorry would have been a total disaster. He was though going to have a few choice words to say to Seamus O'Farrell on the subject of payments in lieu of safe passage. It looked like the smuggling was over for the time being. Smyth wondered if the cattle would be auctioned off at the next cattle auction in the town, if so he may be able to buy them back at a knock down price. Nothing beats a try.

## Chapter 3

### Protecting your Assets

Bad news travels fast, this indeed is a true saying born out many times in the past. Such was the news listened to by Seamus O'Farrell when Smyth the smuggler related the events of the night before to him over a pint of stout in Mulligan's the next evening which ended with the ominous words of no money would change hands until the matter was resolved. So this police officer was to be the thorn in O'Farrell's side for quite some time. Not so thought Seamus two can play at this game. When the pub had shut it's doors to the general public he called a meeting of the volunteers. After some drink had been consumed volunteers became more prone to voice their ideas for ridding the village of this persistent peeler. Liam Megaw came up with the idea of manufacturing a mortar bomb, attaching it to a lorry which was to be parked near the police station and the volunteers setting it off from a safe distance and Boom!! No more police station. He reckoned without a base to operate from they would be long gone. There had been some consideration given to this approach, most but not all seemed to favour this method, from a safe distance seemed to appeal to them. It was Barry Flynn who put a dampener on that idea when he pointed out that firstly mortar bombs were notorious for either not exploding, or if they did they missed the target altogether. His house of course being quite close to the police station and most possibly in the direct line of fire was sure to be demolished if the mortar should miss. He avoided mentioning this fact to the volunteers but said that a secondary consideration would be if the missile missed the village and surrounding area would be awash with not only police but military and there would bound to be the usual house and farm searches which could unearth other hidden secrets. O'Farrell knew that Flynn was referring to the distillation of the mountain dew, knowing that the discovery of the still and worm would most certainly put him out of business until a replacement were to be found.

After more drink had been consumed and more deliberation on the matter it was decided by all present to start the winter campaign by means of telephone calls using a recognised code to the police warning of an imminent attack on the local police station. This task was assigned to Maeve Farrow the sister of a volunteer incarcerated in Long Kesh for an involvement connected to explosives. Maeve worked in the town and at an agreed time she was to phone the hoax call from a phone box to the police HQ. Maeve duly made the call telling that an attack was due on the village police station between 2pm and 6pm that very same day. The news of this galvanised the police into action. Doyle and a party of police left the station immediately and set up an ambush on high ground overlooking the station. The guards were reinforced on all the lookout posts. While another party of men in vehicles inspected the mortar bases. These were the most likely places to send a mortar from to fall on the station.

This was not Doyle's cup of tea, he disliked being pinned in one spot, and would rather be up and at them than lying in wait on a grass bank in the freezing cold. The night before there had been about an inch of frost and the ground was still cold and hard. O'Farrell meanwhile had sent one of his lesser known henchmen in a car fitted with a Citizens Band radio transmitter to scout around the village and surrounding area and report back the situation with the police. The agent reported back via the radio that the police were no where to be seen. O'Farrell knew by experience that by now every policeman was ambushing the station and looking down the sights of a Ruger rifle hoping that some unfortunate terrorists would show up, only to be cut to pieces by enfilade fire from the police lying in wait. He thought they were going to have a long and fruitless wait. The picture of Doyle and his men lying out on damp and cold ground for hours made the Provisional commanders day. He quickly by means of CB radios organised his merry men, soon the worm and still were conveyed and hidden in a high mountain bog in a turf stack. Smyth also was mobile and picking up some smuggled cattle from a hill farm. With the weather becoming hard these beasts were eating the poor farmer out of house and home, as he had to provide extra feeding for them to supplement the sparse grass of the scrubland which was his farm.

By 6pm that day the operation of still and cattle moving had been successfully completed. The weary police had been stood down and a stiff and cold Doyle and his party went back to the police station for a heat at the fire and their well earned tea. The volunteers involved in the operation retired to Mulligan's bar and a well earned drink which the commander gladly paid for out of his own pocket. Probably the reason being that Smyth had paid up for the assistance of retrieving some of his cattle with the sure knowledge that it wouldn't be long before he could move other cattle to or from farms in the sub division with impunity.

Meanwhile back in the police station Doyle had just finished his favourite meal, a steak well done and smothered with mushrooms and onions and finished off with roast and boiled spuds. He was feeling much better, sitting down by the fire and lighting a cigarette he contemplated the events of the day. As he watched the blue smoke from the cigarette drift towards and up the chimney he got one of his well known hunches. The police had been manipulated by the Provies for their own nefarious ends, this he was sure of. Damn it anyway thought Doyle he had been taken a hand out of and wasn't amused. It definitely was the Provies as the code given was authentic, he would have bet his last dollar that Seamus O'Farrell the local Provies commander, was behind this even if he hadn't any proof. It proved one thing thought Doyle he must be getting to O'Farrell as this was the first time since the station opened that the PIRA had seen fit to cause the police some upheaval. Until now the police were having it much their own way. He made a mental note that things would have to be tightened up and the police more than ever on their guard. He was aroused from his thoughts by the Superintendent wanting to avenge a beating at the chess board the previous evening. 'All right' said Doyle 'one game only I want to turn in early, I've an early start in the morning.' 'Not like you to turn in early' retorted the Super 'up for more cattle herding experience then.' 'You're not funny' replied Doyle, 'something is afoot here and I don't like it'. 'What's bothering you' said Macomb. 'Today's attack warning' said Doyle 'it was legitimate and I think I know who's behind it, even if I don't yet know the reason for it'. 'It's over now' said Macomb 'let's forget about it and concentrate on the game in

hand.' The Superintendent won with little or no effort. He could see Doyle was troubled by the events of the day. 'Don't worry, we win some lose some, that's the nature of the game' said Macomb. The two officers sat in front of the fire drinking a cup of tea which the station orderly had kindly brought to them. Doyle lit another cigarette offering the packet to Macomb. 'It's about time we policed the village' said Doyle.



*ie phone in the bomb scare*

*Right Maeve you phone in the bomb scare*



‘I think you might have a point’ replied Macomb. ‘We’ll discuss it in the morning.’ The next morning after breakfast saw Doyle at the head of a party of police patrolling along the main street of the village. It was about 7.30am and Mrs Heaney of the paper shop was just opening up for the day’s business when she saw the police. She was about to put out the Belfast Telegraph Notice Board on the footpath when a tall officer bid her good morning, took the sign off her and placed it in front of the shop. ‘There you are mam that should be all right’. Mrs Heaney was so flabbergasted she didn’t speak; this was not at all like her as she was a well mannered decent countrywoman. She looked up and down the street then darted back into her shop. She was both confused and flustered; the Provisionals had told the business people of the village to have no truck with the police or supply them with any goods or chattels. She was confused because this tall RUC officer appeared to be a real gentleman and only wanted to offer help, while she thought it very ignorant of her not to thank him for his kindness.

Father Ted Craig was also up and about early; he had eaten his breakfast and was sitting on a chair outside the parochial house enjoying a cigar. He had gone out with the intention of walking down to Mrs Heaney’s shop and getting the morning paper, but decided to have a cigar first. To give the Father his full title it was Father Edward George Craig DD PP. He had often thought that his parents might have been royalists as he not only bore the two Christian names of two English Monarchs but the surname of one of the Founding Fathers of Northern Ireland, and him a Catholic priest so to say he was a republican would have been wrong. Father Ted was a big man in his early to mid sixties with wavy iron grey hair and a physique like a former rugby forward. After being ordained into holy orders he had joined the Royal Air Force as a Catholic Chaplain and served in Germany and the Island of Gibraltar. After his service in the armed forces of Her Majesty he came to the village as the parish priest. He loved this Tyrone village and the people of the parish. The troubles now raging in Northern Ireland troubled him greatly, he was aware that the village and the surrounding villages in his diocese had not been free from terrorist activity and as a man of God he had preached

out against the taking of life and belonging to a terrorist organisation. He was also aware that this fell on deaf ears, which were of course if the deaf eared ones condescended to attend church at all.

As he watched the blue smoke from his cigar curl up into the morning sky his attention was drawn to a party of police patrolling the village street. As they passed the parochial house the tall officer in front of the patrol waved a cheery greeting to the priest. Father Ted raised his hand and returned the wave, as he watched the police disappear round a bend in the road his mind wandered back to some years before when one Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary was able to patrol the village on his own without fear of being attacked. He remembered too the big house, no longer there as the Provisional IRA had burned it to the ground when the owner was away on holiday. It was never rebuilt and the owner left the village leaving a lot of the villagers out of employment. Those were good days, the landowner would invite him and his friend the Church of Ireland Priest Reverend Charles Stewart and his wife along with the Police Sergeant and his wife and the local Headmaster Mr Sean O'Rourke and his wife up to the big house for supper of an evening.

Ted missed this and since the leaving of the police sergeant and the landowner company was becoming scarce in the village. He still would call of an evening with Sean O'Rourke and his wife, have a sherry and a bite to eat then return to the parochial house where his housekeeper Mrs Mary Flynn would have left him a glass of milk and a ham sandwich under a cloth on a tray in his study. He missed too the sergeant Jim Burke with whom he used to play chess, it wasn't unknown for him to call at the station house have a glass of malt with Jim, then turn to the chess board make a move and depart. The sergeant would reciprocate by paying a visit to the parochial house while on duty and moving one of the chess pieces on the priest's chess board. This ritual had gone on for some years now the chess board lay idle on the table in the study the pieces only moved when Mary was doing the dusting. One evening when returning from a parish visit he saw that one of the chess pieces had been moved and thought for a moment that Jim

had returned to the village. Alas this was not so, the Provies wouldn't have tolerated Jim back in the Station house. The only answer to the moved chess piece was that Mary had been interrupted in her dusting with the phone ringing and had left it back in the wrong place.

He remembered the Sunday evenings in the summertime, after tea he would sit outside the parochial house, puff on a cigar and listen to the old familiar hymns being sung by the choir at evensong in the parish church. When the service had ended he would stroll down the village street towards the rectory, greeting the parishioners as they made their way homeward and join the Reverend Stewart and his wife for supper. After supper the two clerics would sit at the chess board and play a game over a glass of sherry. Unfortunately since the troubles the Protestant population in the village had dwindled, owing no doubt to the ever present threat from the Provisional IRA. The only Protestant people left were now living in a small hamlet on the outskirts of the village. The parish church was only open on Sunday mornings when an officiating C of I clergyman came and took Morning Prayer. Ted thought that the exodus of the Protestants from the village was terrible and an awful indictment on the Catholic villagers who didn't stand up and be counted, a hard thing to do when you are confronted by men carrying firearms. He felt sad as he enjoyed his visits with Charlie Stewart and his wife and listening to the hymns carried on the evening air. Things would never be the same again.

Meanwhile Doyle and his men were returning to the police station via the low road which ran past the schoolhouse. There was quite a lot of traffic on the road and his men had set up a road stop. His attention was drawn to a well built man standing outside the school house smoking a pipe. Doyle hopped over the stone wall which surrounded the school and approached the man, he greeted the man with the usual, how's things, not a bad day for the time of year. The mere fact of a police officer, in full marching gear hopping over a wall and approaching as if he was a squire out walking a ten acre field surveying his tenants gave Sean O'Rourke quite a start, so much so that he nearly touched his forelock to this man. 'Not too bad' Sean replied, 'could be a hard winter.' 'My thoughts too'

replied Doyle, 'good job the harvest's in', 'you're not from this county said Doyle'. Sean replied he was originally from County Down; he had married a local girl and settled in the village. 'Thought so' said Doyle 'recognised your accent, Down is a good county I served there myself, most of my time now is spent in the big smoke.' 'I bet you see a difference here now said Sean; things have changed quite a bit'.

'Yes' said Doyle 'I remember the time one policeman could walk the village and stopped cars unhindered.' 'It's not like that now' replied Sean 'even ones in vehicles have been known to be attacked'. 'Quite so' replied Doyle 'I look forward to the day that a policeman can walk once more safely on the roads of the county.' 'I don't see that happening for quite some time if ever' said Sean. 'We can but hope' said Doyle and with that he took his leave of O'Rourke and walked across the playground hopped over the wall, joined his men and they went off down the road towards the station.

As the headmaster watched the well armed party of police disappear round a corner in the road, he reflected on what had been said. True it was a better more peaceful time when he had came first to the village. He being of a Republican bent, thought not involved with the Provies, thought maybe if he hadn't in history classes dwelt on the Famine and the Easter rebellion of 1916 along with the absentee landowners, and spoke more of Sir Edward Carson and John Redmond's one hundred per cent backing for the war effort and the suffering of the men of the thirty sixth Ulster Division and the sixteenth Irish Division in the great war when both divisions lost heavy casualties fighting side by side in His Majesty's Armed forces to help free the world of a tyrant, would things have been better. Maybe not, too late to dwell on this now, for the boys he taught were now probably members of the Provies. He was well aware that the local Companies all were manned by young men and had no doubt been involved with the digging in of culvert bombs or one off attacks on isolated members of the security forces. He oft times had been stopped by the local Active Service Unit when travelling home late at night from a teaching conference in Belfast. The volunteers manning the checkpoint had

waved him through which made him think he had been recognised. He noticed too that the ASU had been well armed with rifles and a machine gun. All right he thought to frighten local motorists, but if these members of the ASU came face to face with the young men of the Royal Ulster Constabulary under the leadership of the tall officer he didn't think they would be a match for the well trained police and would come off a bad second best.

Best not to think too long on this thought Sean as he put out his pipe and as he entered the school he made a mental note to pursue more of the history of the First World War with his class. Doyle had entered the police station to find the Superintendent and a party of men leaving on foot. 'What's wrong?' enquired Doyle. 'There has been a suspicious car abandoned on the bridge at the northern side of the village' replied Macomb. 'We're going to take a look and divert traffic'. 'Hold on' replied Doyle 'we'll join you and lend a hand.' Both parties of police approached the bridge from opposite directions. The search dog with Doyle's party checked out the car, while the search dog with the Superintendent's party checked out the under part of the bridge for explosive substances. Both dogs located no explosives either on the car or under the bridge. Macomb told Doyle that the Army Technical Officer was on his way to the scene. The police directed traffic away from the bridge until the army arrived. The explosives officer when he arrived checked the vehicle and placed a small explosive device at the boot and another at the bonnet of the car which when set off lifted the boot and bonnet from the car. The officer then declared the car safe and left. The police lifted the detour and returned to the station.

Doyle had a hunch that something was happening elsewhere in the sub division and that the car was only a diversion to keep the police out of the way.

His hunch was right as O'Farrell and Smyth were busy moving the remainder of the smuggled cattle from the hill farms to another location which shall remain secret.

Meanwhile back at the station Doyle had learned from the station orderly that the same code had been used as previous and the call had been made by an anonymous female. This didn't surprise him

in the least, he had a hunch that the terrorists in the district were moving either arms or explosives and if so this was serious. He told this to Macomb and suggested that might be a good time to introduce themselves to the local population. The Superintendent asked how he proposed they were to do this. Doyle replied that the provies would probably assume that the police would be keeping up a presence on the road leading to the bridge, but that he, Doyle, had another idea which he would divulge after tea.

O'Farrell and his merry men had a good day and O'Farrell had once again been well recompensed by Smyth for the removal of the cattle as had the volunteers who had kept them on their lands. It was therefore a foregone conclusion that they would meet in Mulligan's that evening to celebrate their success, much to Mulligan's delight as his wife not only bought a new winter coat in Belfast at the sales but also came home with a new pair of fur boots. She justified the boots by saying what she saved by buying the coat in the sale, bought the boots and also enabled her and her friend to buy their tea out. That was why Mulligan had a smile on his face when the local ASU called to buy drink. The evening was going quite well and the drink was flowing freely as the commander was standing a few rounds and all were enjoying themselves.

It was a wise man once said good times were short lived, he was right. The door of the pub which led into the public bar opened and there framed in the doorway stood two immaculately dressed Officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. 'Good evening everyone my name is Superintendent Macomb I'm the sub divisional commander and this other officer is my colleague Inspector Doyle. We're here to introduce ourselves and to let you know if you require our assistance we'll only be too glad to oblige. Feel free to call at the police station at any time my door is always open and, no, landlord we won't stay and have a drink as we are on duty.' You could have heard a pin drop, Mulligan nearly had a heart attack, O'Farrell nearly choked on his pint he had, after the first initial shock, started to take stock of these two police officers. The one Macomb who had done the talking he had silver braid on the peak of his cap and two crowns on his shoulders, he was wearing the green serge of the RUC uniform and had two medal

ribbons on the left breast of his tunic. The other officer Doyle was taller, he had black braid on the peak of his cap two pips were evident on his shoulders, he also had the same two medal ribbons on his left breast as the other man, except for an additional ribbon crimson in colour and in the centre of which were two silver oak leaves. O'Farrell realised that this officer had won an individual bravery award and that this was the same blue eyed officer he had come across on the road a few months before, for the third time in as many months he felt his blood run cold and a feeling as if someone had just walked over his grave.

The visit to the licensed premises by Macomb and Doyle put a stop to the celebrations soon after they had left the volunteers followed suit, they had all had guilty consciences and thought when they saw the two officers that more would pile into the pub and they would be taken in for questioning about membership and involvement with an illegal organisation. O'Farrell cursed his luck at being caught out by the police, he made up his mind that Doyle should go by whatever means available, if not he would be haunted by him for the rest of his life. He couldn't figure out why his father thought so well of this police officer. After the visit to the pub the two officers and the party of men continued further along the main street. 'Surely your not going to do the other pub' said Macomb. 'You're right' replied Doyle 'we have to be fair and inspect both licensed premises.' They entered the door of the Rambling Inn, Doyle thought this more in keeping with a Tyrone village pub than the gaudy The Irish Bar down the street, which might look all right in the Bronx in New York and pass as a legitimate Irish bar, but was out of place in a tiny Tyrone village. There were no patrons in this bar, only two teenage children sitting by a large fire doing their homework. 'Is your father about asked Macomb?' 'No' replied the children 'he's coming down with flu and is in the house, he said to give him a shout if anyone came in. Do you want us to fetch him' said the children. Macomb said no it was all right and he hoped that their father would be well soon and the two police officers left. They went back along the street and watched as the patrons filed out of The Irish Bar and headed for home. The police returned to the station where Macomb and



Doyle had a cold meat supper and played chess into the wee small hours of the morning.

The police had a few days of relative calm. The local Provisional IRA had got a shock at seeing two peelers bold as brass walking straight into their pub without even a bye your leave. However O'Farrell wasn't going to take things lying down. He started to plan his revenge for the cheek of the two police officers to boldly beard him in his den.

On Sunday afternoon Doyle discovered that there was bingo in the parochial hall in aid of the building fund, the other police at the station had told him there was always a large amount of traffic in the village about this time. Doyle had an idea that where there were a lot of cars there would be a lot of Provies gaining money for looking after them. He told the Superintendent of his plan to take a patrol up the village on Sunday afternoon. This agreed he and a party of police patrolled the village and while his men were engaged in doing a road stop he engaged the provies standing about in conversation such as, lot of cars about, what's going on, the Provies were uncomfortable about talking to this man but he was so persistent they found themselves answering his questions. 'Not much money to be gained by going in then' he asked one of the volunteers. 'You have to pay a fiver at the door to get in, but you can win big money'. 'Why are you not in there then' asked Doyle. 'I have no money' came the reply. After talking to the other men standing at the street corners the police left and continued out of the village. Now it hadn't escaped the notice of the locals that the Provies were talking to the police, this having set a precedent they now thought that they might talk to the police too. This thought had also struck Doyle and it pleased him that now the Provisionals would have to justify why they could speak to the police while at the same time advising the locals not to. The exercise had also been instrumental in noting the registration numbers of the cars parked in the village, enabling the police to trace the various owners and find out more about them.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The case of the derelict farmhouse**

Now that Brian Macomb had been promoted to the rank of Superintendent and a sub divisional commander Doyle was determined to extend his incursions deeper into the neighbouring villages. He mentioned this to Brian while playing their by now ritual chess game, saying that he thought the time was right to begin searches of outhouses and unused small holdings on the boundaries of the sub division, in the search for arms and explosives. The Super gave his consent and Doyle while on patrol took full advantage of the situation.

It was while on one of his forages far from the village and on a by road that he chanced on a lead. The patrol had just entered the farmyard and Doyle had as usual rapped on the farmhouse door and said to the owner that the police were just carrying out a routine search of outbuildings. He said this was in case some persons had planted arms or explosives on the farm. The owner reassured Doyle that he knew of no strange happenings that might have aroused his interest, but stated that he was also the owner of a derelict farmhouse some two miles away across the fields and the police might want to search it as it was only used for cattle calving in the winter months. Doyle thanked the farmer and the police headed off across the fields.

They soon came on a small low slung farmhouse, built about the seventeenth century, surrounded by a low stone wall. It was evident that it was deserted and a few sheep grazed lazily on the front lawn. Doyle remembered in the late fifty's an RUC Sergeant coming on such a farmhouse while engaged on a search, kicked open the door and was sadly caught up in an explosion which killed him. Doyle bade his man take up positions behind the stone wall to both sides of the farmhouse. He vaulted the small wall and checked the house via the windows. The interior was sparsely furnished; there were some large carpet squares on the floors of the two rooms to the front, the door was tied to a nail with baling

twine as the latch appeared broken. Doyle located a large clothes pole in the garden, brought it to the front of the house where he loosened the baler twine from the door and lying prone on the ground he opened the door slightly with the aid of the pole, thus giving him some protection if the door had been booby trapped.

The door swung open with a creaking noise, Doyle breathed a sigh of relief as he pressed himself up against the wall of the house. There was no explosion, however he still was not happy about committing his men to search the house, there was always a chance of a secondary device concealed within to catch the unwary intruder. He motioned for two Constables to approach the farm from the rear and gave instructions that they should herd two or three sheep towards the front door. This was accomplished easier than the driving of the stolen cattle in the dark. The sheep obliged and not only three but about half a dozen wandered into the house through the front door. The police let the animals meander through the house for a while before turning them out into the garden, the fact that they hadn't tripped a pressure plate meant that the police could now enter and commence a search of the building.

While searching the living room of the farmhouse, the Station Sergeant Sullivan who by now was quite glad to get out and about with Doyle, as he had noticed the bit of play in the waistband of his trousers since this officer had returned and commandeered his services on patrols. Sullivan while moving back the carpet square from in front of the fireplace noticed fresh saw marks on the floorboards which ran left from the fire towards the door. The Sergeant drew Doyle's attention to this, they had a couple of Constables move back the settee and lift back the carpet, sure enough stretching three feet either side of the fireplace and about four feet wide there appeared to be fresh cut marks in the ends of the floorboards. The other strange thing was the two knot holes at either end of this rectangle. On closer inspection the knot holes were actually drill holes in the timber resembling where knots would be in the wood owing to the flat smooth indentations to the left hand side of all the holes.

Doyle had the dog handler put the search dog through the house and when the dog came on the floorboards in front of the fire he got excited and started to bark scraping with his paws on the floorboards. Doyle and his men retired outside and radioed for the Army Technical Officer to come and assist. When there was a clear indication of

explosive substances being on the premises it was better left to the experts to deal with them. The army arrived on the scene and after talking to the dog handler and Doyle the officer went in to the house with his aids. Some time later he arrived out and beckoned Doyle to follow him into the house. The army had placed portable floodlights in the living room and had lifted the floor to expose a hide containing some bags of home made explosives a little amount of plastic explosives detonators both electrical and manual. There were also a couple of automatic pistols a revolver and two machine pistols complete with ammunition.

The Technical officer asked if he should remove the arsenal for forensic examination and destruction. He told Doyle as there were also army manuals on firearms in the hide he thought it may have been a training centre for the Provisionals. He also showed Doyle two lengths of fuse wire both black in colour asking if Doyle knew the difference between them. Doyle examined the fuse they appeared to be both the same; the officer told him that one was fast burning and the other slow burning. If you wanted to throw a blast bomb you would use the fast burning fuse, if you wanted to leave a bomb and escape you would use the slow burning one. He said it was a disaster if you should mix the two up, he then showed Doyle how to distinguish between the two.

The officer was keen to end his task as the daylight was fading and asked again if he should remove the explosives and arms. After giving it some thought Doyle asked the army to replace the fuse wire and cover up the hide, he had decided to stake out the house with the aid of the military thus catching the volunteers as well as the arsenal of weapons and explosives. He told his men of his plan, they all agreed that they should try to catch the volunteers red handed and were keen to take part in the surveillance of the farmhouse. Sergeant Sullivan muttered under his breath, that he

might have known Doyle sooner than later would hit pay dirt and that he Sullivan would be the one that would have to lie out and keep watch while Doyle went back to the station to inform the Superintendent.

In this instance he was proved right as Doyle had to organise the military to relieve the police and had to make an entry in the patrol book in the station. The military detachment took over from the police after dark; they were to be relieved again before daybreak by the police. If anything Doyle knew all about stakeouts, it could be a long cold wait ending with no result. He was nearly certain that the farmer knew nothing of the hide. By his own admission he only visited the farm house in the winter and only then if any of the cattle were calving. Doyle reckoned that the local Provisionals were well aware of the farmer's movements that was why they used the farm for a storehouse. The hide had been well constructed and it was evident that it was for long term use.

The policing of the sub division continued on as normal, save for the lack of patrols being on the by road that led to the lane of the disused farmhouse, and the long watch continued. Doyle's plans were to come to fruition in a most unusual and bizarre way. It happened on the third night of the second week of the surveillance during the hours of darkness, that the watchers heard the sound of cars in the laneway leading to the house. Two cars appeared in the yard they had only their side lights on, they stopped and those watching saw six shadowy figures emerge and go towards the house. Suddenly there was a strong shaft of yellow light shining from the front windows which was quickly shrouded by some sort of dark covering threw over the window from the inside.

The NCO in charge of the undercover party radioed to Doyle at the police station telling him of the situation. Doyle advised him to keep watch until reinforcements arrived and only to act unilaterally if the men were seen to depart. The NCO was advised then to engage the terrorists and attempt to arrest all of them. Doyle asked for military support giving the map references and telling the army that there was a surveillance team at the location who would direct

operations. With that he and Brian Macomb got together a party of men and left for the farmhouse, placing men at strategic points to carry out road stops in the immediate area. Meanwhile as the men watched and waited for the reinforcements suddenly there was a large explosion followed by a flash and a ball of flame shoot out from the farmhouse, debris shot into the air and came crashing to the ground. When the smoke had cleared the right hand side of the farmhouse was demolished and a gruesome sight met the policemen as they cautiously made their way to the seat of the explosion. The two medics found one man who had lost an arm and was bleeding from an artery; they quickly put a tourniquet on his stump and arrested the bleeding. Other police located a man with deep head wounds; he was screaming he couldn't see the medics quickly did what they could.

Doyle and Macomb with the relief party arrived and started to give assistance. The military too arrived and the paramedics gave the two injured terrorists a shot of morphine to deaden the pain. Unfortunately there was no hope for the other four volunteers who must have taken the force of the explosion. I will refrain from describing the scene. Doyle turned away, he felt saddened, much better to have arrested the six terrorists as have young lives thrown away and for what. However if misguided persons will play about with dangerous materials accidents must surely follow, if only the deaths of these men would be a lesson to others, but alas people never seem to learn. The sight of injuries inflicted on the general public by the terrorists and the aftermath shown quite graphically on the television during the years of the troubles of the Oxford Street bus station bombing, the car bombs in Belfast City centre, and the Claudy bombing to name but a few didn't dissuade the terrorists to give up using explosives nothing would.

The news of the explosion soon reached the village, O'Farrell was visibly shaken when he heard of the sudden demise of four volunteers, and he himself was not in favour of using home made explosives as they were very unstable. This he thought must have been a freak accident; maybe the explosives had been kept too long

and had started to weep, who knows what ever happened was a disaster for the local Active Service Units and he was sure that the Army Council would be bringing pressure on him and his unit to engage in some activity which he was sure would be fraught with danger. Seamus thought what ever action was sanctioned with an officer of Doyle's calibre and the well trained young men at his side you could count on some of the unit being hurt. The one thing he didn't want was the young bloods of the mountain villages to wage war on the police in his village, from experience this tactic never worked and only brought more police and military to the district. He was also aware that since the time he duped Doyle with the hoax telephone calls phoned in to the police by Maeve Farrow that Doyle had become more active and that wasn't at all good as Sean had a visit from a posse of police who were keen to search his farm and outhouses, of course Doyle was there and Seamus realised why his father thought so highly of this police officer. He had the gift of the gab and went out of his way to be seen to be put out at having to impose on you and search the farm, while all the time looking you over and taking stalk of everything in the near vicinity. One to be watched this officer thought Seamus and a more than able adversary. There had to come a time though that this persistent officer should not be part of the equation, but Seamus being a shrewd Tyrone man would rather it be some one rather than him tried to take out this man, for he knew that if the attempt should fail Doyle would leave no stone unturned until he found the culprit and apprehend him dead or alive and Seamus wasn't going to barter his life on an ill conceived plan that might go wrong costing him his life.

The other person in the village to get early news of the explosion was Father Ted. He was awakened early by the ringing of the phone. On answering the call he heard the news from a very troubled young priest from one of the mountain villages who had been called to give the last rites to the volunteers. The young man related to Ted what he had seen and was distressed when he was unable to do anything to help. He and some police officers later on, had, when the bodies were identified, went to the homes of the young men and broke the news to the bereaved families, some of

whom weren't aware of their relatives involvement with the Provisional Irish Republican Army.

Ted himself felt saddened by the news, this is what Sunday after Sunday he had preached against, it was wrong to use arms and explosives to further a political objective, it may at the time seem to work but in the long run it was always doomed to failure and brought nothing but death, destruction, and sorrow in it's wake. He went into the church and said a prayer for the families of those who had died and for the souls of the departed. He reflected that they had gone to a higher court to be judged on their deeds. He returned to the parochial house where he ate a small amount of breakfast which he didn't enjoy. There would be the funeral s to be dealt with, his Holiness had made it quite clear that there could be no Christian burial for murderers and terrorists who had gone their own way and forsaken the ways of God. Easier said than done thought Ted, he knew the young priest would have to wrestle with his conscience when the families asked for burial of their loved ones, on the one hand they would come and say that their family member was not in any organisation, on the other hand the priest would have wondered why then were they killed in a derelict house which evidently contained explosives. He was also aware that the remains would be brought to church in plain oak coffins with family wreaths laid on them and after the requiem mass when they had left the precincts of the church the black beret and gloves along with the tricolour would replace the wreathes on the coffins. There would also as if by magic pall bearers complete with masks berets and black gloves carrying the coffins to their final resting place, where a firing party if there was no police presence would fire a volley of shots over the graves. This too saddened Ted as he thought this gave them a sense of respectability. This would of course encourage more misguided young men to join the illegal organisation. He began to wonder if there would ever be peace in Ireland, surely everyone was war weary and would gladly settle for a fair deal which would accommodate all the warring factions and let the rest of us get on with our lives. He said a quiet prayer to God to this effect and left the parochial house to go down the street for the morning paper. When he got to the shop he found that Mrs Heaney had quite a lot of customers gathered in the shop keen to



buy the morning papers. A short time later he had obtained his copy and started to read it as he left the shop, as he was engrossed in the front page news he didn't see the party of police approach from the left. Father Ted had almost collided with Doyle who was as usual in front of the patrol. 'Good morning Father' said Doyle as he put out his hand to steady the priest, 'not a bad morning if a bit chilly.' 'Sorry officer' said Ted 'I didn't see you, I'm sorry'. 'Don't worry there is no harm done' replied Doyle as he extended his hand and shook hands with Ted. 'A pleasure to meet you' said Doyle. 'Likewise' replied Ted 'have a good day'. With that the party of police disappeared round a corner of a building and were lost to sight. Ted returned to the parochial house, he quickly read the paper and after being persuaded to have a cup of tea by Mrs Flynn he retired to the study to do some work. As he entered the study he noticed the chess board, and couldn't help wondering if the tall police officer played chess and if so how good was he. Ted reckoned the way things were he wasn't going to find out. Now a church is a place of worship, and the priest is a shepherd of his flock and his duties are to administer to his congregation, visit the sick, bury the dead, and marry any young couples thus avoiding them living in sin. Not any more thought Ted joined on to that is a job of accountant and administrator of the church as well as the local school. Ted liked his pastoral duties but baulked at the double entry ledger, cheque book journal, along with long financial reports from both the school governors and his trusty laymen in the church. He applied the morning diligently going over the financial reports and as the clock on the mantelpiece chimed out the hour of one o'clock in loud Westminster chimes; he knew Mrs Flynn would have his lunch ready. He went to the side cabinet and took a bottle of Robin red breast from the interior, poured a little of the whiskey into a crystal glass, lit a cigar and settled back in his favourite chair and enjoyed the spirit and his cigar which he thought were well deserved as he thought he had done an exceptional job on the financial reports and that the parish was in a sound financial state save for the work needed done to the roof of the church. He had, since the exodus of the county set, always allowed himself the luxury of a little treat, it made up for him missing the stimulating conversations he had with his old friend the Reverend Stewart and the police sergeant Jim Burke. He was

brought out of his reverie by Mrs Flynn knocking on the study door and announcing that lunch was ready fifteen minutes ago and was he coming to eat it or not. Ted sprung to his feet saying he was coming now; you didn't keep Mrs Flynn waiting not if you wanted to avoid her reproachful looks.

## **Come into my parlour said the spider to the fly**

When Doyle had returned to the station Brian Macomb told him that the Chief Superintendent Sam Quill had sent a message asking both of them to attend a conference at police HQ in the town. Doyle grabbed something to eat and changed from his combats to a dress uniform and joined Brian in his office. They left the station in a Passat car along with Sergeant Sullivan. Doyle was driving and Brian Macomb sat in front with him while Paddy Sullivan sat in the back clutching a Ruger rifle. The Sergeant wasn't a happy man, he had closed up his office for the day and was just coming out of the kitchen when he was button holed by Doyle to ride shotgun for the two officers as they drove to Divisional HQ.

They drove into the station yard and Doyle located a parking space they went into the station Doyle and Macomb to the conference while Sullivan looked up an acquaintance of his who was now the Station Sergeant. The conference was well attended; there were the commanders of the District Mobile Support Units, Sub Divisional Commanders and the senior officers of the Special Branch present. The Chief Superintendent Sam Quill summarised the effect that the unorthodox manner that Doyle used to police his sub division was showing results. That there had been cattle smuggling uncovered, illicit distillation, an arms hide discovered with terrible results, on other matters he had been successful in clearing up some offences under the road traffic act. He asked Doyle to give a brief resume of his methods of policing to those present and to outline a plan where by the DMSU's and police in the other outlying sub districts could facilitate him in his efforts to thwart the terrorists. Doyle outlined his plan; it was as he told them in essence quite simple. As a spider spins his web outward to entrap his prey so Doyle worked outward from the village spinning his web, so far catching offenders in the farther reaches of the web, if more strands were to be added to the web by interaction between the DMSU's and the local sub divisions there would be more opportunity to apprehend more offenders. This would also have the effect of the terrorists

not knowing where or when the police were going to pay them a visit, thus thwart their attempts to wreck havoc around the sub divisions. All the officers present were eager to give this a try and suggested that Doyle should co-ordinate the police tactics. Doyle reluctantly agreed, as this would mean more time spent in the planning of operations and less time spent in the field.

While this meeting was going on Paddy Sullivan had located his friend Sergeant Fred Brown who was now the station sergeant attached to Head Quarters. 'How's it going Paddy' said Fred 'I see you're going like snow off a ditch' 'don't mention it Fred with an officer like Doyle it's a wonder I haven't faded away completely'. 'Thought Doyle was a good one to serve with' replied Fred. 'Maybe so' said Paddy 'but you have to be fit to keep up with him, if he had his way he would have you going twenty four hours of the day'. 'Gets results though' said Fred, 'I hear he has already shook up the sub division, rattled the Provies and no mistake, looks like they might try and get rid of him.' 'I wouldn't like to be in their shoes if they missed, I'd rather have him as a friend as an enemy' replied Paddy, 'what about you and me going to the canteen for something to eat, your treat, I missed my tea through having to come in with those two.' 'Who are you talking about?' said Fred 'The terrible twins of course' replied Paddy. 'Don't let Doyle or Macomb hear you calling them that if you value your stripes' cautioned Fred. 'Oh they are all right' said Paddy 'their bark is worse than their bite and I can think of no two better officers to serve with even if Doyle is a glutton for punishment. He'll stick his nose in somewhere someday and someone will stick a Thompson Sub Machine gun up it.' 'Come on then' said Fred 'I'll buy you your tea before the canteen closes.' With that both friends headed in the direction of the canteen.

Everyone but Macomb and Doyle had left the Divisional Commanders office, as they were about to leave Quill beckoned them to be seated. He asked if they had a driver with them and they replied that Sergeant Sullivan was down stairs. Doyle said if he knew Sullivan he would have found the canteen by now and sitting down to a big feed. Sam Quill produced a bottle of Black Bush from the drinks cabinet in his office, he poured some of the

amber liquid into three crystal glasses and handed one each to the two officers. 'Here's health to you both, well done on the discovery of the training ground and the near seizure of arms and explosives.' He then gave the both a dressing down and said it would have been enough to seize the explosives and arms and leave the capture of the terrorists to a later date. Doyle in his defence pointed out that without the terrorists being caught red handed with the arms and explosives there would be no chance of making a conviction stick, it was just bad luck that the accident occurred. He managed to convince Quill that the explosion was bound to happen as the ATO had categorically stated it was bad news to have mixed up different types of fuses, and that he Doyle had suspected that this was the reason for the explosion.

The Chief Superintendent knew Doyle, the both had served together in Belfast as had Macomb the three had been friends and colleagues for many years, Quill cautioned Doyle to the effect that he was creating too big a profile in the village by always being out on the road. He feared that he was setting him self up for a target for the terrorists. Doyle assured Sam that the new role he had taken on would keep him busy with the planning side of things for some time. Brian Macomb nearly choked on his whiskey, if Sam believed that he would believe anything. The Chief poured out another round of Black Bush and the three officers sat back and talked about times spent together in Belfast. Sam told of the time when as a young CID officer he had come across Doyle who said he needed assistance with a kind of awkward case. He outlined the case to Quill saying that he was convinced that the offender had taken money from a handbag, he also said as he was known to the offender he couldn't interview them and asked Sam if he would oblige. Sam got a statement of admission from the suspect without much trouble, felt good about cracking the case and was pleased at helping Doyle of whom he had heard was a well known officer and well thought of by all who knew him. What he didn't know at the time was that Doyle had not having interviewed the suspect had mentioned to them that the handbag would be sent for fingerprint evidence and that the offender would be fingerprinted and prosecuted and it would serve their best interests to come clean to the detective who would be interviewing them. Quill said Doyle

had neglected to say that fingerprints could not be lifted from a leather handbag.

Macomb and Doyle thanked Sam for his hospitality and went to locate Paddy Sullivan who was just leaving the canteen Brian asked Paddy if he would drive them back to the village. They arrived back in the village about 1am and retired for the night. Doyle content that the web he had woven was showing results.

## Chapter 5

### The Widow's Cap

The next morning Doyle started to work out the strategy which would enable all of the agencies met together last evening to complete the web which he had successfully started to weave. He engaged the help of the young cartographer and they collaborated together on studying the maps of the sub divisions concerned and from that started to plan the routes which would overlap the sub divisions and thus extend and strengthen the web. Once the roads to be patrolled were established it was then a matter of preparing a schedule of times and map references for the sub divisions and the DMSU's to follow.

This was an excellent way to keep a police presence on all roads in the sub divisions surrounding the village without stretching the manpower resources to the extreme thus thwarting the Provisionals and hopefully upsetting any plans they had in mind for attacking the police. It was a pity that this couldn't be worked for the entire district but due to manpower shortages it wouldn't be practical. Doyle had worked it out by dividing the district into four parts, North, South, East and West, after high lighting the village he next added the nearest police stations to it plus the closest DMSU unit.

It appeared on paper to work the only fly in the ointment would be if the DMSU were called on to perform other duties elsewhere in the district it would weaken the web. He had been so occupied with this work that he hadn't realised it was lunch time. He and the young constable headed for the kitchen for their lunch. The Superintendent also had been engrossed in paperwork and had made his way to the kitchen, 'how's it going?' he asked Doyle. 'All right replied Doyle I'd like to take a trip out this afternoon to view two small hamlets to the North of the village about half way up the mountain.' 'Ok then' said Brian 'I'll come with you.' 'What about stretching our legs round the village with the afternoon patrol' asked Doyle 'then going by car and carrying out a few road stops en route'. 'Suits me' said Brian. After lunch the

police left the station on foot and turned North through the village. Near the head of the village Doyle noticed a kind of guest house this was owned by the widow Maguire, there was also a small holding attached to the large house and Doyle thought he might have a nosey round the outhouse. He told the Superintendent of his intention, both officers and two constables started towards the entrance to the small holding which ran along the side of the house, while the others carried out a road stop. As they were passing the side door of the house Doyle knocked the door which was opened by an attractive dark haired lady in her early fifties. 'Sorry to trouble you mam, we are just taking a look round the outhouses if you don't mind'. 'I don't mind in the least' said the widow, 'do come in gentlemen and heat yourselves by the fire. Sure I had a few friends drop in on me at lunch time and you're welcome to a cup of tea'. Both officers declined and said that they had just finished lunch. As I have already said the widow was an attractive lady though maybe figure wise getting a bit on the matronly side and it was quite evident she was quite taken by the Superintendent who cut quite a dash in his green uniform and silver banded peak on his cap. 'It's a pleasure I'm sure to meet two such fine gentlemen as you' she continued. 'Sorry' said Doyle 'let us introduce ourselves, this officer is Superintendent Macomb and I am Inspector Doyle, pleased to meet you I'm sure.' 'I'm Kathleen Maguire, and sadly my husband Mick just up and died on me not more than a year ago, God rest his soul. 'I'm very sorry to hear of your sad loss' said Brian. 'Oh that's kind of you sir, I now only have this house to keep a roof over my head, maybe sir you might be in a position to help me.' 'I would like to be of assistance but can't see what I can do' said Brian. 'Well sir I had hoped to start a little hotel and restaurant and would think if I just had the sign to put up outside saying Tourist Board Approved I might be able to have tourists stay with me'. 'Quite so' said Brian 'but how could I be of assistance.' 'I thought if a fine gentleman as yourself might write a letter to the Tourist Board mentioning that you know me and that I am of good character, they would listen to you and give me a licence and sign.' Brian dodged answering directly but advised the widow to apply to the board for a licence and he thought that they would give her favourable consideration. Doyle who was



watching this fencing match finally extracted the flustered Super from his plight by saying ‘we’ll have to be going sir!’ ‘All right just coming’ said Brian, ‘good day to you mam’. Kathleen replied that she hoped to see the Superintendent call again. With that the two left and continued to the end of the village where they radioed for the two cars to lift them.

*The widow's cap*



When driving towards the two small villages Doyle outlined his plan to the Superintendent while checking the maps he found the two small villages not to contain a police presence and he just wanted to familiarise himself with the topography of the area and see how he could link up the policing of them with the plan he had already mapped out. They toured round the periphery of the villages and the adjacent roads two of which Doyle recognised as ones used by the cattle smuggler, the night he gave chase to him. This was an interesting coincidence, maybe the stolen cattle had been concealed on one of the many hill farms dotted around this part of Tyrone, or about to be when intercepted by the police Doyle made a mental note that if he ever got some spare time he would follow up this hunch.

The two officers arrived back in the station at tea time and after they had eaten the Superintendent challenged Doyle to a game of chess. 'I thought you might be going to visit with the widow this evening' teased Doyle getting his own back on Brian for the ribbing he took about the stolen cattle. 'What do you mean?' retorted Brian 'Well with the widow throwing her cap at you I presumed you would be out to pay court on her'. 'Give over you are not a bit funny' came the reply 'lets get on with the game in hand.' Doyle chanced one more dig at the Superintendent, 'you could do worse Brian the widow would feed you well and after all if she got her licence from the Tourist Board, that wee place would be a gold mine if peace ever came to this country. Just think you could retire and settle down here in the lap of luxury'. 'Give over and make your move' retorted Brian visibly flustered. You sure could take a hand out of him when you find his Achilles heel. That night Doyle won the game of chess quite comfortably.

Towards the end of the week Doyle had completed his plans and worked out a schedule of patrolling to cover a twenty eight day cycle, it was now time to have copies of the routes and times of the patrols delivered by hand to the Chief Superintendent and the other Sub divisional Commanders who were involved in operation spider. The other copies had to be delivered to the heads of the DMSU units that would be taking part. Doyle had reckoned that if

this operation was successful it would keep the local Provisionals wondering and unsure of the police movements for the rest of the winter.

Now there was one thing to be said for the Provisional IRA in that part of County Tyrone, they were more inclined to keep to the fireside during the intense cold nights than try and attack the police. This sort of thing would keep until milder weather arrived, and besides with the new plan of Doyle's being put into action they didn't know when they were going to meet a police patrol. It appeared to the volunteers that the police must have been insomniacs as they seemed to be coming out of the woodwork and it was never a good idea to mount an attack on them when they appeared ready for it.

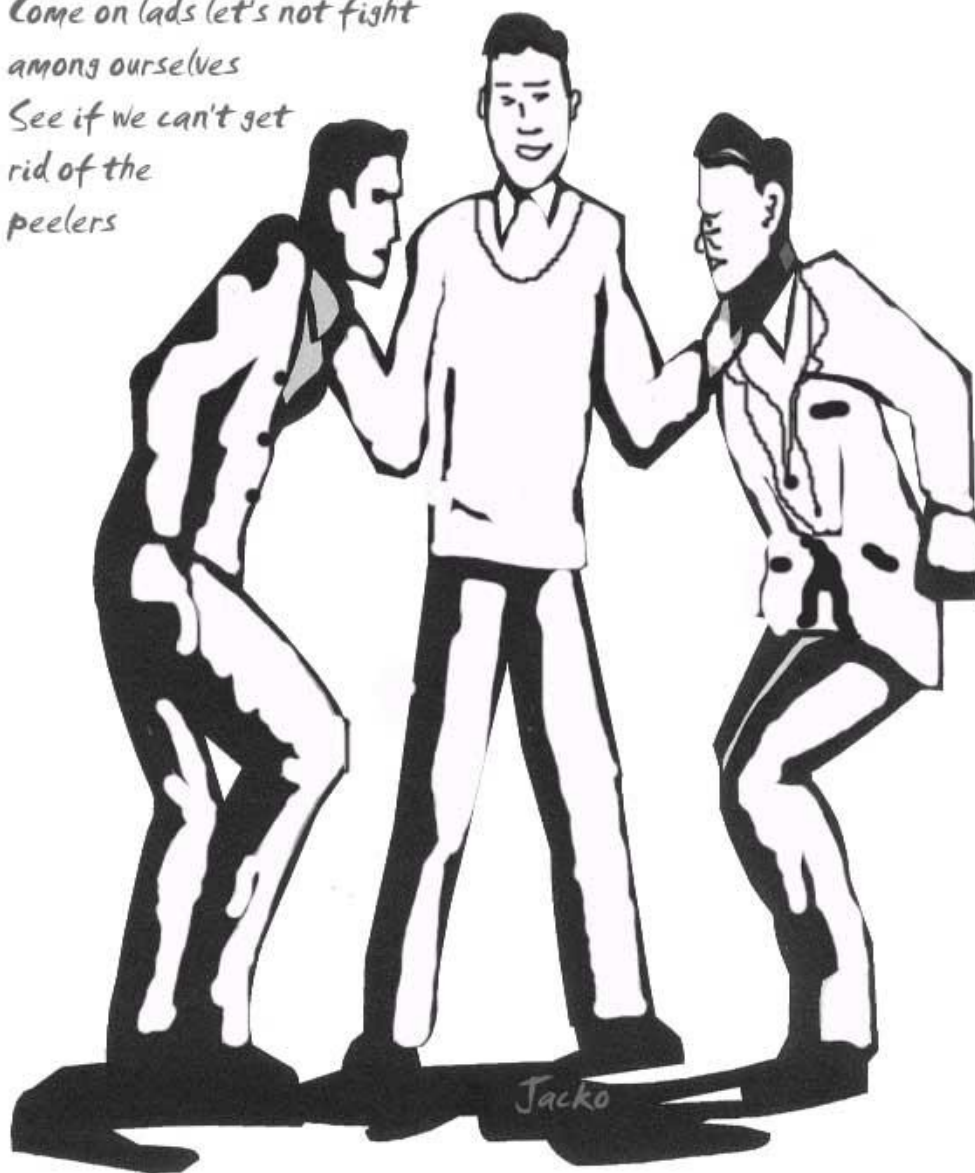
The young commanders in the mountain villages were quick to latch on to the idea that it wouldn't be long before the police were making incursions into their villages in the search as always for illegal arms and explosives and it was quite possible that they would unearth some and that the unfortunate owner of the property would be spending Christmas looking out from the bars in a cell in Long Kesh Prison. The volunteers who had such stores on their small holdings were becoming somewhat jiggy of the possibility of detection by the forces of the crown and started to complain to their respective commanders. This had a knock on effect as the young commanders looked up Seamus O'Farrell and did some bending of his ears, giving him some stick for not sorting out Doyle before now. They accused him of being soft and having no back bone, asking if he was that afraid of one peeler he shouldn't be an IRA commander. These young bloods were in dire peril of having their blocks knocked off by Seamus who didn't take lightly to being called a coward. He did see the significance of calling a meeting of all the local commanders to discuss likely ways to engage the police without much harm befalling the volunteers. A meeting was arranged for the Irish Bar after closing time the following Tuesday evening at which all of the commanders and their deputies should attend.

The following Tuesday evening Mulligan's bar was more crowded than usual for that time of the week. It looked as if all the commanders and their aids decided to attend. Mulligan was beaming from ear to ear as the cash register was singing his favourite tune, he wasn't as pleased to learn that there was to be an army council meeting to be held in the bar after closing time, and especially when he learned that it was to find a way of despatching Doyle to the happy hunting ground. Mulligan couldn't bear to think of the repercussions if the plan went pear shaped, and began to wish he had invested in a pub in the town, that the village could become too hot to stay in.

The meeting got under way after the locals had left, and as quite a lot of drink had been consumed prior to closing there was no shortage of ideas how to rid the village of the police. Things were as always going round in circles when Liam Megaw saw fit to expound on the mortar bomb. The young commanders from the mountain area latched onto this idea and asked Megaw if this could be achieved. Liam now having a place centre stage started to elaborate on his plan to blow up the police station and every one in it. He told the commanders that he could borrow a welding unit and weld an iron cage to his lorry to which he could fasten steel tubes to act as launchers. There should be no problem getting the necessary explosives to do the job.

Seamus groaned under his breath, if this idea went pear shaped it would end in disaster. Barry Flynn also for the second time thought that this might be a good time to put his house on the market and head for the town. The young commander from the nearest village seemed to be pushing for this action and further added to the plan

*Come on lads let's not fight  
among ourselves  
See if we can't get  
rid of the  
peelers*



by saying that the officer behind the police campaign should be taken out at the same time by luring him and a party of police away from the station and into an ambush at the same time as the station was to be bombed. Seamus was not sure that this would be a good idea, as if Doyle and his men should manage to overcome the ambush it would leave the escaping volunteers at the mercy of the police patrol, and just having blown up their station they would be in no mood to take prisoners. He kept his councils to himself as he was still smarting from the insults of the arrogant commander who was evidently trying to hijack the operation and cast aspersions on O'Farrell's leadership. If it should go wrong then he and his ASU should bear the brunt of Doyle's wrath, Seamus did however manage to play for time by suggesting that an operation of this magnitude should be thoroughly planned and a few dry runs should be attempted and another meeting planned prior to the start of the operation to ensure of it's success, as failure would mean that such an operation could not be carried out for some considerable time. The young commander named Hare reluctantly agreed. It was agreed that Megaw should start on the welding of the cage and also the strengthening of the body of his lorry and that on Tuesday fortnight the first dry run should take place. The mountain ASU would lay the ambush, while O'Farrell's ASU should do spotter and also man the getaway car to take the driver of the lorry to safety after he had abandoned his lorry in position to launch the mortar. O'Farrell was quite content with these arrangements which meant that he could take a back seat and if things went wrong he would only be blamed for playing a minor part in the operation. The meeting ended and they all left, it was a worried Mulligan who retired to bed to spend a restless night, thinking of the lost revenue if it became known that he was harbouring subversives.

## **The Watchtowers**

When in the station Doyle always spent time in the watch towers with the young police who manned them he kept encouraging them and made sure that they were not spending too much time on guard duty. One Tuesday evening long after he had gone to sleep he was awakened by one of the young constables who told him that a lorry had been seen stopping on the top road and then a car pulled up and the two vehicles remained parked for about fifteen minutes and then drove off in opposite directions. These actions made Doyle suspicious, he had the hunch that something was soon to happen. He went to the towers and thanked the young officers for their vigilance and said they should note any strange occurrence either day or night in their notebooks and relay their findings to him or the Superintendent.

The following day Doyle told Brian Macomb about the incident and said he was worried that there might be an attempt at bombing the station. He suggested that the next Tuesday night he should leave the station before midnight with a party of men in two cars and they should be left off at the small wood where they would go on foot to the grounds of the Parish Church and lie in ambush while the two cars went on in to the town. If there was any sight of the lorry, and it would appear that the station was in for an attack, the police would ambush the lorry and car and try and avert the bombing. This plan was agreed.

The next morning saw Doyle and a party of men set out for the hill country to the west of the village by car. It was a clear bright frosty November morning the night before the temperature had fallen to minus eighteen degrees. On being left off the party made their way along small winding country roads for a couple of miles. There was nothing much stirring and no traffic on the road. When they came on a small mountain bog Doyle decided to cross it as it was frozen solid. He thought as they made their way across the bog that you couldn't have crossed it in the spring or summer without knowing your way. The little search dog raised a cock pheasant, this was the first one Doyle had seen since his arrival.



The sight of it brought his mind back to happier times in County Tyrone.

He called a halt to the patrol and sat down on a tree stump to enjoy a cigarette. The police were well off the beaten track and were able to relax for a while. Doyle had waylaid Paddy Sullivan on the way to his office and said that he might enjoy a walk in the fresh air. Trouble was you didn't say no to Doyle so the sergeant found himself clutching a Ruger rifle instead of a pen and venturing forth, it was at times like this he wondered why he hadn't offered his services as an instructor at the training college. He sat down on a turf stack left his rifle beside him and caught the packet of cigarettes thrown to him by Doyle. 'Well Paddy feeling the pinch?' enquired Doyle. 'Not that you'd notice' retorted Sullivan. Just then as Paddy Sullivan reached to hand back the cigarette packet the turf stack started to slip and upended the embarrassed sergeant on his posterior in a damp patch of bog, Sullivan swore under his breath, but Doyle was past him in a flash as he had spotted, sticking out from the now wrecked turf stack, something wrapped in green canvas. The police moved back while the dog handler searched the stack and surrounding area with his dog for explosive substances. This search proved negative. The police then gingerly removed the wrapping and uncovered a copper worm belonging to a still used for the illegal distillation of poteen. A further search of the bog uncovered a small still. Doyle radioed for transport and soon police and the seized objects were being conveyed to the station.

It appeared to Doyle that some persons in the area were earning some additional cash by the illicit distillation of alcohol. The spirit would most likely end up as legitimate whiskey or vodka in the local public houses. He made a mental note, when he got a chance, to enforce the liquor licensing laws. However his mind was pre occupied by the immediate threat of a bombing of the station and he had a hunch that this was going to happen sooner than later. O'Farrell senior was working about his farmyard when a lorry driven by Megaw entered the yard with a load of turf; this was an extra way of making money for him when he wasn't driving the van in the town. 'How are you doing Mr O'Farrell?' asked Megaw

‘I’ve a load of turf for you’. ‘All right Liam I appreciate the turf and will give you a hand unload the lorry.’ The two started to unload the lorry and Megaw asked if Seamus was about. ‘Not yet’ replied his father ‘but this being Saturday I’m expecting him soon.’

Soon the last turf sod was taken from the lorry and both men took a rest. It was then O’Farrell senior noticed the new shiny steel plates with bolt holes in them attached to the wooden body of the lorry. Wonder what he wants to strengthen the body for thought O’Farrell, but didn’t bother to enquire as he thought it was no business of his.

Just then Seamus drove into the yard. O’Farrell senior went into the house to put the kettle on for a cup of tea. Megaw couldn’t wait until Seamus had got out of the car to tell him that when he had visited the mountain bog to load the lorry with turf, he noticed that the peat stack in which the worm was hidden had been wrecked. On further investigation of the bog he also discovered the still missing. Seamus was in no doubt that it must have been Doyle and his police who had discovered his hiding place. Megaw showed Seamus the steel plates screwed to the body of his lorry, and told Seamus that the welding was nearly completed on the cage. O’Farrell senior was just about to come into the yard to tell the other two that the tea was ready when he heard Megaw say ‘it won’t be long now till you can stop worrying about the nosey peeler, when the mortar is launched at the station it will be good bye police.’ O’Farrell senior stood frozen in the doorway, he couldn’t move, it was unbelievable that he had just overheard a plot to blow up the police station in the village. It was quite on the cards Liam Megaw knew all about it and that somehow his son also knew something of the aforementioned bombing.

He composed himself and called from the doorway for the two men to come in for a cup of tea. After the tea was over Seamus and Liam bade good bye to O’Farrell senior and headed towards their respective homes. The old farmer sat back by the fire, lit his pipe and turned over in his mind the thing that he had just heard. He was one of the old school of Official IRA men, true he had in the nineteen fifties cut down telegraph poles, blew up some telephone exchanges, and after removing the signal man had set

fire to the signal box on the GNR railway; but he had never killed a policeman. Some police had been killed when stations or barracks as they were then called came under attack, and one constable had been killed by idiots when he crossed the border to see his girlfriend, but his ASU hadn't harmed any police. It was terrible to think that his son might be involved some way in the murder of policemen, he shivered, it was his son and blood was stronger than water no matter what way you looked at it. His mind drifted to the police officer Doyle, there was a man you could look up to, he was only trying to do his job, and you couldn't fault him for that. Thus O'Farrell senior struggled with his conscience, he came to a decision that he would somehow try and warn this policeman of the possibility of a bombing of the police station without implicating anybody, after all he wasn't sure if there was going to be an attack or whether it was all bravado on the part of Megaw. He made up his mind that if he ever got talking to Doyle he would try and raise the matter.

You can call it luck, coincidence or fate, but things have an uncanny way of manifesting themselves. For a few days the following week O'Farrell senior had made more trips than usual to the village and the local market town, on none of these trips did he catch a glimpse of Doyle. Unknown to O'Farrell senior Doyle had availed of some leave and returned to Belfast for a few days break. It was while he was on leave that he encountered his eldest son who was also a serving officer in the RUC. He too was home on leave from his station on the Fermanagh border. One evening over dinner he told his father that he might be interested in hearing that a Sinn Fein activist from the outskirts of his village had been seen in conversation with a gunman who specialised in contract killings, used a sniper rifle and travelled with his own hirelings on various assignments. This got Doyle thinking it would appear that the Sinn Feign person was none other than Sean McGovern, he also knew of the gunman his son had referred to. Was it possible that the Chief Superintendent Sam Quill had been right when he told Doyle that he was setting himself up with too large a profile? He thanked his son for this information and asked how he liked it in County Fermanagh. The two chatted for a time about the young man's

exploits and then bade each other farewell until the Christmas holidays when his son hoped to get leave until the New Year.

On his return to the police station Doyle was approached by Chief Inspector Flanagan from the police HQ in the town, Brian it appeared, after Doyle had gone on leave, had to attend a conference at Brooklyn Police HQ in Belfast and Cormac had been sent from the town to do relief until Doyle had returned. The chief told Doyle of a happening which had occurred on the previous Tuesday evening. He had been awakened at about 2am by the duty constable who informed him that an accident had been reported at a crossroads about six miles from the station and that there was a woman in her fifties injured. The constable told him that on a couple of Tuesday nights there had been strange goings on and what should he do about it. The chief had awakened Paddy Sullivan and after ringing the ambulance service in the town confirmed that no ambulance had been tasked to that area. Paddy had told the chief that Doyle had suspected that there would be an attack on the station and that they were to look out for a ploy to draw police away. The chief said he had not sent any police to investigate and the next morning at first light had checked the crossroads for signs of an accident with negative results. The other thing that occurred was the appearance of the lorry and car on the top road at approximately the same time as the accident report.

This together with what he had learned from his son made him surer that an attack of some sort was imminent on the station.



## **The appearance of the SAS**

When Brian Macomb returned from the conference Doyle made him aware of the happenings and told him he had a strong hunch that an attack on the station was imminent. All the relevant information was collated and forwarded on to HQ by hand. That evening Doyle made his way to the wash rooms at the rear of the station to place two shirts in the washing machine. On entering the building he tripped over something soft which was lying on the ground. He switched on the lights to find a number of military sleeping on the floor of the washroom in their sleeping bags. He said 'sorry to disturb you' which was met with a grunt or two from the direction of the sleeping bags. On leaving the washroom he made his way to the front Sanger and enquired from the constable on duty who the military visitors were. 'They are a foot patrol sir which must have been on a covert patrol in the sub division' was the reply. Doyle went to the TV room and there found more military, an officer bade him sit down in a chair on which he had a forage cap which bore the scull and crossbones. The officer removed his cap and Doyle sat down beside him. 'What's an 18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Lancer officer doing out on the side of his foot in County Tyrone without his little tank' enquired Doyle. 'Just taking in the scenery' was the wry reply. Doyle took a liking to this witty officer who appeared to be of Italian extraction. 'Seriously though' the officer continued 'you are the man I presume who has stirred up this hornets' nest'. 'Not really' replied Doyle 'I only pried into things here and there. The hornets nest was already here.'

'Well Brigade have become concerned both about your welfare and that of the part time UDR who are living in the sub district, we're carrying out covert patrols in the near vicinity of the part time members homes. We just dropped in to take a break and get a warm up then we're off.' 'Glad to see you at any time' said Doyle, 'you should drop in more often. By the way if you see anything unusual in your travels let me know. I have a hunch we might

have uninvited visitors soon'. Doyle filled the officer in on what had been taken place over the last few weeks. The officer appeared to already be aware of much of what Doyle told him and said to Doyle 'now you mention it there was an odd happening the other night; we were lying out in fields some distance from the village when we noticed blue flashes from what we thought were electric cables. On a closer inspection we saw that the flashes were coming from an outhouse on one of the small farms dotted about the area. As the time was about 2am we made it our business to get as close to the property as we could without being observed. We saw one man hard at work with an acetylene burner welding pieces of iron together. He was so intent on his work that he was oblivious to our presence. Needless to say we melted away into the night and continued our patrol'. 'Very interesting' said Doyle 'could you show me a map reference'. 'Sure' said the officer and drew a map from his pocket and after spreading it out he pointed the farm out to Doyle, asking if it meant anything to Doyle. 'It most certainly does' replied Doyle as he recognised the small holding of one Liam Megaw; 'it's most useful what you told me. I'll bid you goodnight and let you get some sleep, see you again no doubt'.

Doyle went to the caravan and wakened Deacon who was already sleeping. 'What's the matter' he asked, stretching and pulling himself up to a sitting position? Doyle told him of the visit of the military. 'Brigade must be as sure as I am of an impending incident somewhere in the sub district, as there could be no other reason for a squadron of SAS to be operating in the area carrying out covert patrols'. Deacon had to agree with the logic of Doyle's train of thought. 'If your hunch is right' he told Doyle 'we could be in for a rough time.' 'A good time' said Doyle 'to be more vigilant and to keep up the high profile policing, with more night patrols being carried out.' With that the two turned in for the night.

Dawn saw Deacon and a party of police leave the station and carry out a road clearance to the south of the village. By nine o'clock Doyle and a smaller party of police made their way through the village to the West, branching off to the right at the crossroads. They were climbing a steep hill at the top of which was a factory

shop of sorts, probably more aptly called a drapery come shoe shop. In front of this shop was parked a Nissan car. The young constable at the head of the patrol stopped and made a check of the tyres; they were threadbare and presented a mechanical death trap to the driver of the car. He had just taken out his notebook to jot down the particulars when a woman akin to a swirling Dervish came out of the shop and launched a verbal attack on the young man, so furious was the attack that the young constable blushed. This encounter brought Doyle back to the days when he was a probationer constable. It was the beginning of the marching season and he along with other police had been travelling to Dungiven to police an Orange parade. The older men all had Second World War medals on their tunics and all weighed about fifteen stone each. There had been talk that there might be a riot.

When they arrived they debussed and took up a position at the bottom of the main street in the village. Doyle asked the other officers what it was like to be in a riot. Not too bad they reassured him. One said, just hold on to my belt when we get the command to draw batons and the other thing to remember is to put the chin strap of your steel helmet to the back of your head, so that no one can throttle you with it. Everything was going all right until they got the command from the Head Constable to form ranks. Doyle made to catch the officer's belt with this right hand, only to be told by the others when they discovered that he was left handed to move to the left. He found himself the last man on the left. The line of police started to move round the corner of the buildings when Doyle was jostled and his steel helmet fell off and started to roll down a hill towards a council housing estate. As he pursued the run away helmet he came on a countrywoman cycling towards him and as she drew near she gave off to Doyle in no uncertain terms that he had no right to be harassing law abiding village folk when he should be arresting them Orangemen. Doyle had no time to discuss the matter and he finally retrieved his helmet as it entered the housing estate which was gaily painted in green white and yellow. He placed the helmet on his head, drew his baton and ran back to join the other police. As he rounded the corner of the buildings he collided with a burly constable who asked him where he thought he was going. To which Doyle replied 'to the riot'.



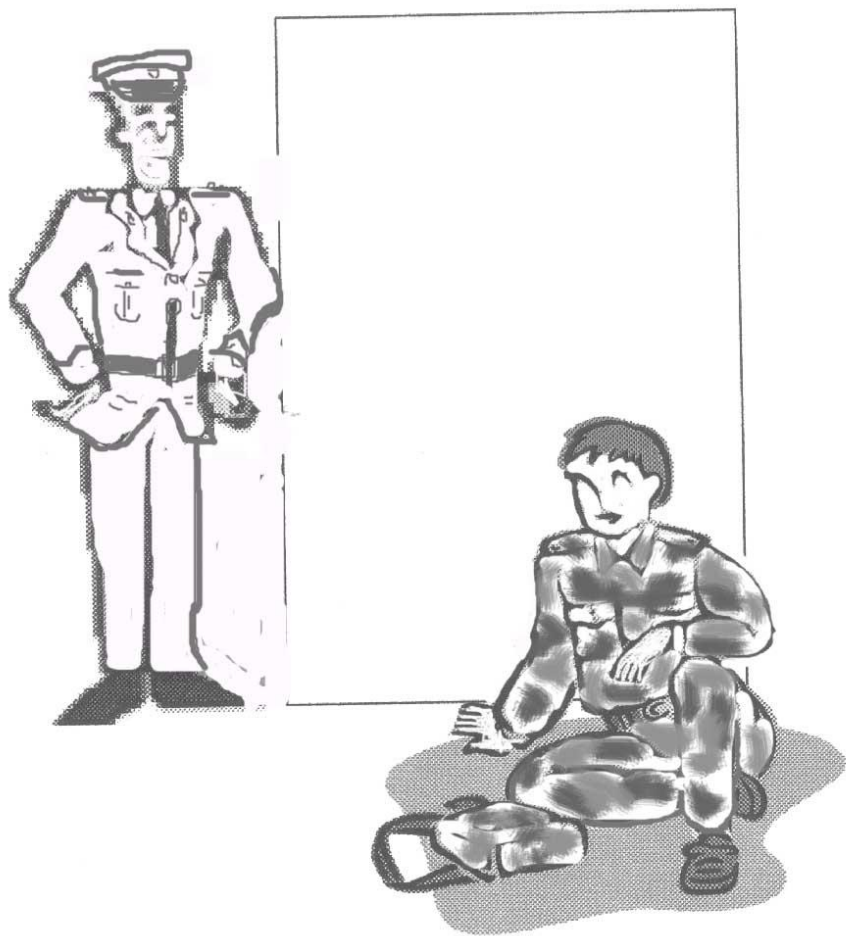
‘You needn’t bother came the reply; the District Inspector went to talk to the prospective rioters and clocked the ringleader with his blackthorn, thus averting the riot’. The tonguing he took from the country woman was nothing to the one the young constable had to take.

Doyle watched the young constable who was handling the situation well, he explained to the woman who was haranguing him that the tyres on the vehicle if not replaced could cause the driver or another road user their life. The woman settled down some but still held out by saying that the car was owned and driven by her shop assistant who needed the vehicle to get to work, she had been joined by an attractive young woman in her early thirties who Doyle recognised as Maeve Farrow whose brother was an inmate of Her Majesties Hotel at Long Kesh convicted of being in possession of explosives. The shop owner’s son had also been incarcerated in the same prison and that probably explained why the lady was so venomous towards the police. The young constable informed the driver that he was noting the offence and asked if the vehicle would not be driven until the tyres were replaced a caution would be issued if the vehicle was produced to the police station in the village within a fortnight with new tyres on it. Mrs O’Dea put her two penny halfpenny worth in by stating no such thing would be undertaken by Maeve as her car was not parked on a public road but on Mrs O’Dea’s’ property.

Doyle thought it was time he extricated the constable from this worsening situation. He politely told Mrs O’Dea that she may be right in her assumption that the ground outside her shop may indeed belong to her, if so the car was on private property, on the other hand this piece of ground may constitute part of the county road and therefore belonging to the Rural District Council or the Department of the Environment and the only way to resolve the matter was for the constable to issue Maeve with a summons to appear at the local petty sessions court in the town where the case could be heard and the matter of ownership of the road in front of the shop sorted out. With that he bade Mrs O’Dea and Maeve good day and the police went off down the road leaving Mrs O’Dea for the first time in her long life speechless. She lit into the

hapless Maeve for bringing that Black B-----d about the place and told her to get her car away as soon as possible.

The patrol had wended its way across country and came out on the road overlooking the police station. There they set up a road stop, checking the credentials of any driver coming their way. It wasn't long before Doyle noticed a car in the line of traffic he recognised. He went over to it and greeted the driver. 'How are you doing Mr O'Farrell, good to see you out and about?' 'Nice day officer' replied O'Farrell senior 'I'm just on my way home from the town'. 'Funny' said Doyle 'I was thinking about you the other week. The dog raised a cock pheasant in the mountain bog just a few miles above your place; they must be coming back to the glen'. 'Looks like it' said O'Farrell senior 'it's a good sign', his mind was racing how he could warn Doyle about the mortar bomb threat. Then Doyle gave him an opportunity, 'must be with the troubles there are no sportsmen out shooting game'. 'Your right' replied O'Farrell senior getting out of his car and looking down towards the police station, 'there are others though out taking pot shots at people, I was just noticing that's a bad place to build a police station from here you can see right into the yard'. 'Probably when it was built in the nineteen thirties they didn't think that there would be missiles that could flatten it' replied Doyle. 'Maybe so' said O'Farrell senior 'but I still think it was a stupid place to build it'. As the line of cars was moving off Doyle waved O'Farrell out of the line and bid him good day as he drove off up the road. As he drove home O'Farrell senior was in a better mood, he reckoned he had repaid Doyle for his kindness and understanding towards him with regard to the tyres, drivers licence and poteen. When back in the station Doyle pondered on what Mr O'Farrell had said, he knew the old man was right in his assumption that it was a bad place to build the station for this was the most vulnerable position for a mortar to be launched at the station. He would have to try and ensure that this was never allowed to happen. He bumped into Brian in the corridor and both went to the canteen for lunch.



**Just admiring the scenery officer!!**

## **Chapter 6**

### **The chain of Command**

Just as Doyle was contemplating the probable attack on the police station, so was Seamus O'Farrell but he was approaching it from a different angle entirely. Seamus was suspicious of the two young firebrands from the mountain villages, he was certain that they were trying to usurp his authority and try and oust him as the local commander of the Provisionals. It was the Army Council's policy to have the Active Service Units act independent of one another; as if one operation went horribly wrong and the perpetrators caught it would mean no information could be extracted from the volunteers regarding the other units. This information was on a need to know basis and the volunteers didn't need to know, however it was in O'Farrell's best interest to find out as much as possible of the intentions of the mountain village ASU. To this end he decided to pay Megaw a visit as the little weasel had ingratiated himself with the mountain village commanders by volunteering to build a launcher for a mortar bomb. He arrived at Macaw's farm about 7pm and found the latter sitting in front of his fire drinking a glass of whiskey. 'It's you', said Megaw; 'you scared me half to death coming in like that'. 'Serves you right' said O'Farrell 'I'm surprised you hadn't locked the door'. 'I'll be going out to do some welding later on' said Liam 'the cage is complete and I'm only closing off the mortar tubes then she'll be ready to go'.

'Look here Liam' said O'Farrell 'what about the commanders from the mountain village what's the craic, do you think they are capable of dealing with Doyle? If they fail to take him out the village will be too hot for us to stay in.' 'I don't really know' said Liam, 'I was in the pub in the village the other night and saw one of the young commanders, you know the one that talks a lot, and he was deep in conversation with that fox Sean McGovern'. 'Have to be going Liam' said O'Farrell, 'see you soon.' As he drove back home O'Farrell was deep in thought. Something wasn't right, he would love to know what McGovern was doing drinking in the

mountain village and what's more what had he to say to the young Provisional commander. Little did Seamus realise that he was losing ground to the younger men, Sean McGovern had learned from a contact in the Army council that the ASU's from the mountain villages were planning to attack the village police station and he was making sure he was going to get part of the action, the action would be very little and you can rest assured from a safe distance.

Meanwhile Doyle and Macomb were also laying plans both for the subsequent averting the attack and the engaging of the terrorists in a fire fight. The plan was quite simple, it would be threefold. The policing of the roads around the villages would remain the same during daylight, but at night Doyle was to take a small well armed patrol out of the station and lay an ambush at the site where the mortar would most likely be launched from. The patrol would also patrol the village stopping and questioning any passing motorist. The chain of command stretched to the town where the Chief Superintendent would augment a plan which would have the local police plus the DMSU ready to close in on the village from all points. Doyle told Macomb that they had also the support if needed of the covert patrol of military operating in the sub district.

The following Tuesday night O'Farrell got word that there was to be a meeting of all the commanders in Mulligan's pub after closing, where the final preparations for the attack on the station would be discussed. Mulligan was a bit surprised to find a large number of patrons in his premises on a Tuesday evening. However he was pleased to see they were buying quite a quantity of drink. He was not so pleased however when Seamus O'Farrell arrived and told him he was summoned to a meeting of the Provisional IRA after closing. Mulligan became more worried when he witnessed the arrival of the two young men who had given O'Farrell a hard time at the last meeting. Almost on the dot of closing when the ordinary villagers had left Mulligan was surprised to see Sean McGovern entering the bar, O'Farrell too was taken back by the appearance of the councillor as he didn't drink in the village.

With the pub closed the meeting commenced. The young commander from the mountains outlined the plan and asked Megaw how the launcher was coming on, Megaw was quick to say that it was complete and he only needed help place the cage and the tubes on the lorry and have them bolted down and that was it ready. The commander said that the mortars would be delivered under cover of darkness in a few days time. Sean Flynn who was at the meeting made a mental note that whenever the attack was to take place he would endeavour to be away as far as he could from his house. It was soon plain to see why Sean McGovern was there, he announced that the services of a hit man had been engaged to deal with Doyle, and that he and his three cohorts would be travelling north a few days beforehand and would be staying at safe houses in the mountain villages. It was then up to the men in the mountain ASU's to deal with the rest of the police patrol which was to be ambushed at the crossroads.

This announcement gave O'Farrell the chance to put his two pence halfpenny worth in and get some of his own back. 'As I understand it' he said, 'on one of the dry runs the ASU in question was to lure the police to an accident, to which the police didn't respond.' He said 'if this had been the real thing my men would have been left to the mercy of Doyle and his police who just might have been in the vicinity and not at the ambush at the crossroads'. The young commander wasn't too happy about being taken to task over this disaster and told O'Farrell that he worried too much.

During this meeting Doyle and a patrol of police were going from the station towards the main street of the village. On their way they noticed rather a lot of cars parked in the main street and on further inspection discovered more vehicles on the side road running to the council estate. When they were opposite the Irish Bar a young constable drew Doyle's attention to a chink of light coming from an opening in the drapes of the public bar. This seemed strange as the living quarter's next door was in total darkness. Doyle checked his watch it was 1am, he beckoned to Sergeant Sullivan to approach and told him when he gave the signal to knock loudly on the door of the pub and announce that it was the police.

There was a slight opening in the double wooden doors which led from the main street into the yard of the pub. Doyle placed himself next to these doors and signalled for Paddy to knock the door. Shortly after the door was knocked Doyle could hear movement from the public lounge of the bar towards the rear door of the living quarters. He joined Paddy and said 'keep Mulligan in conversation as I want to go into the yard and check it out'. A flustered Mulligan opened the door and told the police he was just washing up for the next day. Doyle along with Sergeant Sullivan and two constables entered the bar. Paddy asked Mulligan to accompany him as he wanted to look at the lounge. During this time Doyle made his way into the yard and towards the back door of the house. He found the door ajar; he entered the kitchen and stood listening for a while. He heard the creaking of floorboards and thought Mrs Mulligan had a lot of unannounced guests in her bedroom. He returned to the bar and joined Paddy Sullivan and Mulligan who now looked a terrible bad colour. 'That will be all for now' said Doyle 'we shall no doubt meet again soon'. With that the police left the bar. The police had taken the registration numbers of all the cars parked in the village that night and when they returned to the station did a vehicle check on all of them and separating the vehicles owned by the villagers with those of the people who were in Mulligan's at 1am that morning. The results proved very interesting.

There was great concern shown by the volunteers who had managed to be caught in Mulligan's, O'Farrell was kicking himself that he should have been caught out by Doyle. He thought that this police officer was to be a spectre that would haunt him for the rest of his life. He didn't know Doyle was with the party of police but he seemed to sense he was there for the blood ran cold in his veins and he had again that awful feeling as if someone had walked over his grave.

The police hung about the village for quite some time which made things more uncomfortable for those trapped inside. Doyle called off the patrol and returned to the station and the volunteers a short time later emptied out of the pub and made their way homeward.

Doyle related to Brian Macomb the next morning the findings of the previous night. All of the strange vehicles had been accounted for and consisted of one staff car belonging to the commander and his aid from the mountain village, a car belonging to the local Provisional commander from the village, a car belonging to a bomb expert from a village outside the division, a vehicle belonging to Megaw, and a car owned by the local Sinn Fein councillor and a number of cars traced to active members of the local Active Service Unit. It appeared that Doyle and his men had chanced on a planning meeting of the Provisional IRA, which must have been a high powered meeting to warrant the attendance of so many commanders and also the Sinn Fein.

This thought Doyle was the test of strength that was about to happen soon between the police and the Provisional IRA. It confirmed his hunch that an attack of some sort was imminent on the police station. Doyle and Macomb took no time in going to the HQ and placing all the information they had into the hands of Sam Quill. The Chief Superintendent appeared perplexed when all had been divulged to him about the meeting in the pub and also Doyle's hunch about the attack on the station taking place soon. He asked the two officers about their plan.

Both Doyle and Macomb outlined the plan they had decided on and asked if the Chief Superintendent would assist by arranging back up from Division and the DMSU's if required. Doyle pointed out that if their plan was to work all the agencies should work as one and therefore carry out the operation in one fell sweep.



## **The Spider checks his web**

The web that Doyle and his colleagues had woven stretched now outward from the village engulfing all of the other four villages and snaring them within it's strands. As the spider feels his web tremor and tighten as an unsuspecting insect or fly is entangled in it, and goes to investigate the catch, so Doyle and a strong party of police backed up by a local DMSU and an army patrol went forth to find out what they had caught in the web.

The first thing Barry Flynn knew was a large number of police outside his door trying to knock it down, 'coming' called Barry as he hurriedly dressed and looked at the clock it was 8am. He opened the door and was met by a police sergeant brandishing a search warrant. The sergeant told Barry that he and his men were about to search his home and outbuildings for arms and explosives under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. N.I. They then proceeded to methodically take his home apart.

At the same time Seamus O'Farrell was rudely awakened from a rather restless night with the banging on his door. He realised that this must be the police and chanced to leg it out the back door only to find his way obstructed by a burly sergeant of the Royal Ulster Constabulary who showed him a piece of paper and told him that they were about to search his home and outbuildings. O'Farrell's mind raced had he any arms on the premises, no he had taken his rifle and rounds of ammunition and hidden them far up the mountain in a cave he had discovered in his youth.

Liam Megaw woke to find police and army already hard at work pulling his barn and outhouses to pieces. He got out of bed and stood petrified for some time as he noticed through the window the figure of the tall police officer with the pale blue eyes. He swore under his breath, started to compose himself. He had nothing to worry about, the launcher was not yet complete and the explosives hadn't arrived, feeling a bit better he ventured out into the yard and confronted Doyle 'what are you doing wrecking my place?' he enquired. Doyle remarked that they were just taking a look around

and would want to search the living quarters and produced from his pocket a search warrant duly signed by a magistrate.

By this time the police had uncovered the cage and steel tubes, Doyle asked Megaw to explain, he said that the cage was for a sow that he had and was about to give birth, it hopefully would keep her from rolling over on the piglets. He told Doyle that the steel tubes were needed to construct a double roller. That would eventually be filled with cement for weight and used to roll the grass seed in to the ground in the spring. Doyle was not happy with the explanation but without any other evidence such as finding detonators or explosive substances he would have to accept the explanation

The other village's received the same treatment, a few firearms were recovered, and also a small amount of home made explosives recovered in one of the mountain farms. The farm owners were arrested and taken in for questioning. There were also some IRA documents seized including some training manuals. It was interesting to note that other than the cage and tubes nothing of importance was unearthed in the searches of the village and sub district.

The long arm of the law was now reaching into every nook and cranny of the Division, this left the Provisional IRA in a flat spin as they were never sure when their homes and property would be searched. It was evident that there was more of a police presence on every road since the planning meeting had been interrupted by Doyle and his men. This hampered greatly the movements of the Provisionals, and also meant that the volunteers who had missed the initial searches of the police were sweating over the arms and weapons that they had concealed on their farms were unable to off load them to other more isolated places of concealment.

Seamus O'Farrell counted himself lucky that he was for the moment in the clear and had gained another respite as there was nothing more certain than the attack on the police station would have to be put off for at least the foreseeable future as it would have been madness to attempt an attack with so many police on the

ground. The other person to breath more easily was Megaw, had the mortar been ready and mounted on his lorry no doubt he would be by now looking out at concrete walls from behind bars in Long Kesh Prison as a would be IRA bomber. Barry Flynn also breathed a sigh of relief; he thought that this might be a good time to put his house on the market, just as a precaution in case the wild men from the mountain would maybe chance another attack on the police station. He had no confidence in Megaw having the ability to place the mortar in the right place to hit the police station and not his house. On reflection he decided that by now the jungle telegraph had got an inkling of the possible attack on the police and that he would lose quite a lot of money by selling his house at the moment that is if it sold at all.

The police kept up the patrols and the searches not only of premises but also fields and hedgerows for explosives and arms, some of which were uncovered in shallow hides in ditches on obscure mountain roads; other explosives were located buried under road rubble at the side of the road. These finds must have been a blow to the Provisionals. It appeared for the moment that the police had the terrorists on the run and were masters of all they surveyed. If this situation were allowed to continue the Provisional IRA would lose face in the district and the Army Council no doubt would try to come up with a plan to turn the situation around. Most certainly the young commanders who by now had lost ground that they had gained from O'Farrell would have to do something to regain it. The present situation suited Seamus as he didn't have to say I told you so and without doing anything had won back the respect of the local volunteers as being a very wise commander indeed.

It was about a fortnight later when Doyle and a patrol of police were at the farther reaches of the sub district that they came on another party of police coming towards them from the opposite direction. Doyle was surprised to see the Chief Superintendent out on patrol. As they came closer he asked 'did you have a fire in your office sir?', 'don't be facetious' came the reply 'I'm taking a leaf out of your book and engaging in some active service', the other one to look surprised was Paddy Sullivan when he spied his

friend Fred in the patrol. 'Hi Fred I see you have exchanged your pen for a Ruger rifle, they must be at a low ebb if they managed to get you out of your office'. 'You've seen nothing yet, Sam Quill has gone as mad as the other two, and he's even got his clerk out on the road doing patrols. I think there is something big going on, but nobody tells me anything, after all I'm only the station sergeant'. 'Don't worry so much Fred after all think of the good you're getting from the exercise.'

The two officers had moved forward slightly from the police and Sam told Doyle that he was expecting another attack probably on a part time member living on an isolated farm just outside Doyle's sub district. Doyle asked what information was available to support this hunch. The Chief Superintendent told him that a part time reserve constable in the police HQ who worked the night shift at weekends had told him he had been followed home by the same car on two occasions during the last week. He was unable to get the registration of the car but was sure that it wasn't a coincidence that the car was on the same road at the same time on both occasions. Sam said that owing to the seriousness of this he was calling in specialised help and also involving the special branch. Doyle said if he and his men could assist to let him know.

The two parties went their separate ways. On the way back to the station Paddy Sullivan told Doyle what Fred Brown had been saying about there being something big in the offing. Doyle told Paddy that this was true but that the matter would be dealt with by another agency. Once back in the station Doyle related to Brian Macomb what Sam Quill had told him about the reserve constable being followed home after his turn of duty at police HQ. 'You would think that after the rousting that they got the Provies would lie low for a while until the heat died down' said Brian. 'They will have to do something quick to re establish themselves or risk going out of business' replied Doyle. 'I think it would be a wise move to keep up the foot patrols in the near vicinity of the area you were patrolling today when you met the Chief and his men. Sam Quill doesn't come out of his office for the good of his health' said Brian. 'You can bet that the reserve constable resides not too far from where you met the patrol.' Doyle agreed to this plan of

action. That evening the both officers engaged in a game of chess that lasted into the small hours of the morning.

The next morning Brian who now as Sub divisional commander was given the task of policing a small demonstration held by the farmers in the neighbouring village some six miles away, this village was predominately protestant and about a third of the population catholic. He asked Doyle if he would accompany him, at 9am the two left the station in one of the Renault cars which was driven by Doyle with a young constable in the back as rifleman. The demonstration which was against the cut in prices to the farmers was friendly. Doyle and the Super talked with some of the protesters who told them that there would be a large rally at Stormont in the coming weeks. Doyle could sympathise with the farmers as the living on a hill farm in Tyrone was hard enough without the farmers being deprived of grants and the supermarkets trying to drive the price of potatoes and vegetables down. This proved a relaxing day and both officers were entertained to tea in a tent erected in a nearby field. The tea and sandwiches had been supplied by the farmer's wives. The protest being over the two thanked their hosts for their hospitality and drove back to the village station. On the way Doyle remarked that this was the best way to police a demonstration. The first thing being that the demonstration was peaceful and the only duty the police were engaged in was the directing of traffic and the marshalling of the parade.

Hi Fred I see you  
swapped your pen  
for a Ruger

I'm just taking a  
out of your book



## **Chapter 7**

### **The Ghost Squad**

It was about a week since the farmers protest that Doyle entered the station from the direction of the caravan to find the station duty orderly, a young constable of six months service sitting on the stairs with a glum expression on his face. 'What's up with you, you look as if everyone belonging to you has died'. 'It's them sir they put me out of my control room'. 'Who put you out?' asked Doyle 'Those strange police' he replied. Doyle went to enter the control room but was met by a sergeant who told him that the room was out of bounds for a while. His protesting was to no avail, he went back down the stairs and told the constable, to go to the canteen and get something to eat. He went to the Superintendents office and there found Macomb in conversation with a Chief Inspector. Brian turned to Doyle and said that all patrols were stood down until further notice as there was an operation going on in the district and these police were using the control room as a base.

Doyle held his own council and went back to the caravan where he told Deacon of the situation. He knew from past experience that the strange police were the unit that backed up any operation called by the special branch. They were similar to the commando unit he had been a member of in his youth. These were members of a ghost squad coming into a division to do an undercover operation and then leaving again with out a trace. The following morning they were gone only to return again the following night at nearly the same time. Doyle would have liked to know what they were doing in the district, but he knew that he would be told nothing, he thought it was all right for them to swan in and take over the place and swan out again the next morning without a by your leave, Doyle and his men had to stay and police the sub district long after they had gone. By dawn they were gone and Macomb told Doyle that normal patrols were to be resumed.

After breakfast that morning Doyle took a party of police thought the village on foot, it was 10am and as he passed Mrs Heaney's paper shop he noticed a notice on the telegraph bill board outside the shop. It read 'young men shot at police road stop in Tyrone'. So that was it he put two and two together and knew that it must have been the members of the ghost squad who ambushed the men while carrying out a pre planned road stop. He knew that there was no use in trying to buy a paper and putting Mrs Heaney in a difficult situation by now the lady in question had plucked up the courage to nod to him whenever he chanced to pass the shop. Doyle continued with the patrol and made a mental note to find out more about the shooting.

The other person to learn of the incident was Father Ted who had gone to the paper shop and collected the paper, on returning to the parochial house he went to the study and unfolded the paper. On the front page in big letters he read. 'Last night in County Tyrone four young men returning home from a dance in the market town had crashed a police road stop and the police had opened fire with automatic weapons, unfortunately critically wounding the driver and three other occupants of the car. On arrival at the hospital a doctor pronounced life extinct. Another car at the scene drove on and the police would like the driver to come forward as he or she could be a valuable witness to the case.' Ted was visibly shocked he disliked greatly hearing of any young person losing their life but this was terrible four young persons killed at the same time. However he wasn't convinced that the report in the paper was the whole truth. He couldn't take it in that the police would open up with such powerful gunfire on a vehicle which had just driven into a road stop. Unfortunately there had been young people shot by the army and shot at by the police in Belfast when they tried to avoid a road stop but never had all the occupants of the one vehicle been killed. He was aroused from his thoughts by the phone ringing. He answered it to find a young priest from one of the villages asking for his help with funeral masses as four of his parishioners had been killed in a tragic accident the previous night. Ted assured the priest that he would assist with the mass and to let him know when the funerals were to take place.



Not another four misguided young men, thought Ted, he knew the village well where the young priest had been phoning from and knew too that it was nearly all republican. He had an awful sinking feeling that he was about to bury four more young volunteers, as it was certain that the police had taken out at least half the members of an Active Service Unit of the Provisional IRA which must have been out to commit a terrorist act somewhere in the county. He had no proof of course only a gut feeling that the police weren't usually inclined to use as much fire power as appeared to be used on the car that these young men were travelling in. No doubt all would be revealed at the funerals which if they were IRA they would be hijacked after leaving the church and the usual black beret and gloves along with the tricolour would be draped over the coffins. Of course the families might object to this sort of show and not allow it to happen, one never knows. The thing that mattered to Ted was that four more young lives were lost and he had to commit four young bodies to the grave. He bowed his head and prayed to God that there would soon be an end to all this hatred and strife in this beautiful country and that the people should once again live in harmony with one another, and no more lives would be lost.

Seamus O'Farrell got the news on the television; he sat frozen to his chair, unable to take it in, four young men killed in one night by a police patrol. Was it possible that the local police had opened up on a car load of young people coming home from a dance? This didn't sound like the actions of Doyle and his police, something wasn't right here, where did it happen, how did it happen, sure the television said it was in County Tyrone last night, but no more. He was confused, of course he had been afraid of taking on Doyle and his men in a fire fight, of course he knew that the police with their training and Ruger rifles would have the superior fire power, but he knew that an officer like Doyle wouldn't order his men to open up so powerfully on a car just crashing into their road block, he would just have ordered one of his sharpshooters to fire a shot at the driver to try and stop the car there had to be another reason why the police used so much fire power. He was angry with himself, why was he defending an officer of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, when he didn't even know if it was Doyle's police

who were involved or not. He suddenly realised why, Doyle was a good peeler he was fair-minded, was impartial in his dealings with people, he didn't treat you as nobodies but as individuals. At last he understood his fathers liking for the man. Here was a man that commanded respect from enemies and friends alike. Still O'Farrell had to find out what had really happened the previous night to warrant the police taking the lives of four young men. He was in for a shock when he eventually finds out.

When Doyle arrived back at the police station he bumped into the Superintendent 'Have you anything on the shooting last night?' he enquired 'Not much I have just got back from Divisional HQ and learned that the four young men who were shot were terrorists who were out to assassinate the reserve constable who served in the town. As they were following him home from duty they ran into our friends who were here for the last couple of nights as they were mounting a road stop, tried to evade it and were shot.' 'Nothing else then' enquired Doyle. 'Only that's according to the special branch officers who were evidently shadowing both the reserve constable and the terrorists that there appeared to have been two cars with terrorists aboard.' 'Looks like one managed to evade the road stop; I would like to know the identities of those who were in the car' Doyle replied.

Doyle was glad that the reserve constable was safe but knew that the four terrorists who had planned the assassination of the policeman had paid a heavy price, without even seeing the car which they were travelling in he knew that there would be bullet holes in grouping of three and not more than four inches apart in every door of the car and that the occupants would have died instantly. This would have been a clean and very professional killing in defence of a colleague it would also cause the police to be accused of operating a shoot to kill policy. Doyle knew that the police at the scene only used what force was necessary to stop the terrorists carrying out their plot and at the same time keeping themselves from having casualties, there was no shoot to kill

policy, it was just something used by politicians to take the heat away from why the young men were killed and to discredit the police. No doubt Sinn Fein would put a different slant on it and accuse the police of wantonly killing four innocent Catholic youth on their way home from a social evening in the town. Whatever the outcry there still remained the fact that there would be empty chairs in four homes in the county this Christmas and this saddened him. When will people ever learn that the time for the armalite and the ballot box was over? Doyle looked forward to the day when a policeman could once again walk a beat on his own and that the two communities would live in peace and harmony once more, like in the days of his youth.

It wasn't long before Seamus O'Farrell learned through the jungle telegraph part of the story. It appeared according to the local gossip that an Active Service Unit of the Provisional IRA from one of the mountain villages was out and about scouting around the area when they came on a police road stop. One of the cars veered off down a side road but the other car which was in the front ran smack into the police who opened fire killing the occupants. Seamus shivered, you couldn't believe all the gossip but a lot had a ring of truth about it. He reckoned it wasn't beyond possibilities that an ASU had been out for no good and ran into the police, but what was the police doing a road stop on that road for, and who were the police? This question bothered him. He thought it looked more like an army operation rather than police; it had the hallmarks of one as it appeared a clean and professional job, and he was worried. If there were other police units in the district as well as Doyle and his men, who were they and more to the point why were they there. Seamus had enough to cope with Doyle and his men breathing down his neck with out any more to contend with, he dearly would like to know the occupants of the car that got away as he wouldn't have put it past that fool Hare to have been involved somehow. It looked like one of his hair brained schemes, however he would just have to wait and see.

After this tragedy things in the sub district quietened down the four young men had been buried and Father Ted was pleased to learn that the families had told the IRA that they didn't want them to

take part in the funerals in any form, the families just wanted to bury their loved ones quietly and respectfully without any fuss. Ted helped the young priest with the requiem masses and as he left to drive home he felt a deep sadness. The priest had been introduced to the families of the young men and he realised after talking to them that almost all had not known of the involvement of their sons with the Provisional IRA until told so by the police who had to break the sad news to them of the deaths of their sons.

Seamus O'Farrell had gone to the funerals, and wasn't surprised to see the young Provises commander Hare and some of the volunteers from the mountain ASU's also at the funerals. The one person he was surprised to see however Sean McGovern present as he had thought lately that the Sinn Fein were trying to distance themselves from the Provisionals. He had been seated near Liam Megaw and after paying his respects to the families he caught him up. 'Bad business this shooting Liam' 'Sure is' replied Liam. 'What do you know about it, and what had that fellow Hare to do with it?' asked Seamus. 'Nothing more than what the papers and the gossips have heard' replied Liam. Seamus sensed that the little weasel knew more than he was willing to tell, he had been absent from Mulligan's and Seamus had through his father who sometimes drank in the pub in the mountain village found out that Megaw had been seen there in the company of Hare and members of the mountain ASU. 'We miss you down at Mulligan's' said Seamus 'where have you been hiding yourself?' 'Here and there' said Liam. Seamus knew he wasn't going to learn anything from Liam so he bade him farewell and went home.

The police had stayed away from the funerals except for a small presence to direct traffic and let the hearses out on to the main road to take the remains to the local church cemetery after the mass. There had been a couple of special branch present at the masses, just keeping a watchful eye on the proceedings and noting the members of the Provisionals who were present. The special branch officers just appeared as ordinary members of the congregation, there to pay their respects. Their presence went undetected by all who attended the service.

Back in the village Father Ted poured himself out a glass of whiskey as he had felt chilled at the graveside, settled down in his favourite chair in the study and wondered should he stay in the village this Christmas or go and visit a friend in County Antrim and call and see the Reverend Charlie Stewart and his wife who were now serving in a parish in Antrim near to his friend's church. He thought he might just do that and maybe have a game of chess with Charlie.

The widow too had some of the mourners call on her for a meal, which she gladly provided and also gave her visitors a glass of whiskey to help keep out the cold, you understand the drink was on the house as she as yet didn't have her licence from the tourist board. At least that's what it looked like, but you can rest assured it would be reflected in the bill. The local volunteers who had attended the funerals retired to Mulligan's for a drink and to reflect on the whole episode before tea.

## **The first Snow of Winter**

It was the second week in December; Doyle had taken to doing mobile patrols round the periphery of the sub district. There wasn't much traffic moving about, and he soon found out that doing patrols in vehicles after eleven o'clock was not doing much good as he kept coming across tracks his vehicles had made earlier in the evening. The only other tracks in the snow being that of an odd tractor which evidently had been taking hay or feed stuff to animals which were still out in the fields, this was clear to see by the wisps of straw and hay which had fallen off the trailer onto the snow covered ground.

The day time foot patrols were much the same, after the initial rush of villagers into work in the town and then the mothers taking children to school there was only the odd vehicle to be seen making its way through snow covered roads. Tea time saw the return from the town of the villagers from work and after that there was nothing moving in the whole sub district. It was as if wild life, villagers, and terrorists had all started to hibernate for the rest of the winter. The only ones left out in the cold and the snow were the police officers either in vehicles or on foot, keeping up the constant vigilance and patrolling that ensured that all the citizens of Northern Ireland could rest comfortably in their beds safe in the knowledge that the silent watchers kept vigil while they slept.

There is one thing to be said of the Rural District Council in that part of Tyrone, and that is, it's very economical with the salting of the county roads. Their thinking seems to run in the direction of main roads that link one town to the other, or either head in the direction of Belfast or Londonderry require to be salted, while all other roads and road users in the county could do what they like about the gritting of the roads.

The following evening saw Doyle once again out on patrol, there had been a fresh fall of snow and when they turned onto the main road which ran past the village it was covered in a very wet coating of snow which had been churned to slush by the heavy volume of

traffic at tea time. It was dangerous to try and carry out a road stop so he contented himself with driving through the mountain villages and quite a distance along the mountain roads. He asked his driver to stop at a small lay-by; he got out of the car, lit a cigarette and looked out over the great glen. It was a bright moonlit night and the moon was casting a silvery glow over the glen and silhouetting the native trees of oak, chestnut, beech and ash which were now denuded of their leaves and the bare branches were covered by a frozen layer of snow. All was still save for the gurgle of the small burn whose water rippled and shimmered in the bright moonlight as it rushed over the pebbles and rocks on it's way to the river and then on to the open sea. Doyle thought that his snow covered Sperrins looked peaceful and undisturbed; it was as if they hadn't changed since he was a boy.

His mind drifted back to the winter of nineteen fifty six when he had cycled from his uncle's farm to the town to see a film in the local cinema, the evening had been dry and cold. On leaving the cinema he met a young lady with whom he was friendly, the young couple talked for a while outside the cinema. As she was leaving with her friends she asked if they could meet again. Doyle promised he would come in to the town next evening and they could meet up for a chat. The girl agreed and went off up the town with her friends while Doyle started to cycle the six or seven miles back to the farm. He was looking forward to meeting up with the young lady as it was a year from they had last met. As he pedalled out of the town along the narrow winding roads which took him closer to the farm it started to snow, and all who live in this county know when it snows it doesn't know when to stop. Soon the young Doyle had to dismount from his bicycle and walk the rest of the way home. He arrived at the farm late and got an admonishment from his grandmother to the effect that he should have left the town earlier.

The next morning found the farm snow bound, there was no chance of Doyle being able to meet the young lady as he had promised. The snow lasted over a week and when it finally thawed he had to return to Belfast, he wrote a short letter to the girl and posted it to her office explaining why he had been unable to keep

their date and hoped she would forgive him. He was destined never to see the young lady again as he joined the RUC and after his training was transferred to County Antrim. In those days if you had relatives in the county you were not permitted to serve there.

He put out his cigarette and thought fine thing here am I back in the county twenty odd years later. The thing that had changed about the county from his youth was then everyone helped each other, Catholics and Protestants both working side by side in the fields at harvest time bringing in the crops. Unfortunately this was no longer true, the snow covered mountains and valleys that he loved still looked the same but alas now evil men walked the land determined to cause as much death and destruction as possible in their efforts to forward their political aims. This evil emanated both from the Loyalist as well as the Republican enclaves. It was like a cancer eating away at the country and the only way to deal with it and stop it spreading and causing more misery and death was to keep vigilant and where it was seen to manifest itself to make sure that the police were there and ready to deal with the rooting out of it. The police could only do so much; they badly needed the backing and goodwill of the decent people of both communities to finally eradicate the evil that walked in the guise of political expediency.

This wasn't going to happen as long as the terrorists of both persuasions held the communities in the grip of fear. It was up to police like himself to get back into the communities and show by their efforts that they were determined that the rule of law should prevail. He got back into the car and the patrol drove towards the town where the driver had despatches to deliver to the police HQ before returning to the village. On leaving police HQ he asked his driver to call at the military base as he wanted to visit the cavalry officer and wish him a happy Christmas. He found the young officer in the mess. 'What will you have to drink?' he asked. 'I'll have a small whiskey thanks,' replied Doyle. 'I was wondering if you will be getting home for Christmas.' 'Maybe I'll get home at the New Year. What about you' 'If I'm not here I'll no doubt be in Belfast city centre looking out for car bombers. I wish you a Happy Christmas.' Said Doyle 'and to you



too' replied the officer. 'I hope you get leave in the New Year' said Doyle. With that he left the army barracks and the patrol drove back to the village.



## **Christmas in Belfast**

It was now the second week in December and Father Ted had begun to work on the services he intended to conduct over the Christmas period. The one service he really enjoyed was the service of nine lessons and carols, which his friend Reverend Charlie Stewart always conducted in the Parish Church. He had decided to stay in the village for Christmas and was determined that there should be a service of nine lessons and carols at Christmas, as well as a watch night service. He thought that the message of Christmas should be heard loud and clear throughout the Parish, might even get the other three churches in the Parish involved with these two services. With this in mind he retired to his study to plan the logistics of this venture. When he had finished he poured himself a small whiskey and settled back in his favourite chair and lit a cigar.

As he drank his whiskey and smoked his cigar his mind drifted back to the time that he spent as a Padre in the Royal Air Force. He remembered well the Squadron dinners at Christmas and the preparation of Christmas services which were jointly run by all the three main Christian churches, for all the service personnel who could not get home for Christmas. These were happy joyous occasions where everyone participated and the message of Christmas was all around. How he wished for the day that all the churches should join together in worship and friendship. With the evil that existed in the country at the present time he realised that the time for joining together in worship was still far off. Mrs Flynn roused him from his meditation by announcing that lunch was now ready, and if he didn't get a move on it would be cold. Not to get on the wrong side of his housekeeper he extinguished his cigar in an ash tray and headed in the direction of the dining room.

Meanwhile at the police station Superintendent Macomb was in his office reading some despatches which had been delivered from the police HQ in the town. The one he was now reading stated that he was now promoted to the rank of Chief Superintendent, to take effect immediately and that he should return to Belfast where he was to join the staff at central secretariat in police HQ at Brooklyn. This news had come as a bit of a shock as he wasn't expecting to be promoted so soon, he was pleased however for he was first a career policeman and had already moved quickly up the rank structure. The next despatch concerned Doyle evidently Doyle had been right in his assumption that he would be in the city centre for Christmas and this communiqué confirmed it. Brian sent for Doyle who was getting ready for another patrol. On entering the Superintendent's office Doyle was aware by the look on Brian's face that there was something in the wind. 'What's up with you, you look like the cat that has swallowed the cream?'. 'Doyle you're not going to believe this, I've been promoted and am bound for Belfast to central secretariat to take effect immediately. It will be Christmas in Belfast for me'. 'I suppose from now on when we meet I shall have to address you as Sir!' said Doyle. 'Don't be daft, are you not going to congratulate me?' queried Brian. 'Of course I am I think you really deserve the promotion, but you're off leaving me here on my own over Christmas.' retorted Doyle. 'That's where you're wrong', said Brian 'it looks like you were right when you said you would be in the city centre for Christmas. The confirmation has just arrived.' 'Oh well that's both of us off to the big smoke for the holidays. The difference being that you will be in your big office at Brooklyn while I'll be out in the foggy streets of Belfast.' said Doyle. Brian asked Doyle 'Look for a transfer to another specialised unit and come and join me at Brooklyn.' Doyle replied 'It wouldn't suit me being tied to an office desk; I would miss being out and about.' 'That's about it, you wouldn't be able to poke your nose into other peoples affairs.' retorted Brian. The Superintendent told Doyle that there was another despatch to the effect that the station party would be relieved just after the holidays and some of the more recent arrivals would have to stay behind for six months longer to familiarise the new station party with the sub district. 'I bet that news will be met with mixed feelings' said Doyle 'It's always hard to part company

with men who you served with in a dangerous situation. That's probably why I'll miss you.' 'Get out of it Doyle the only thing you'll miss is beating me at chess, and running the terrorists ragged in this part of the country' 'Maybe so, but I enjoyed serving with you we made a good team.' With that Doyle departed on his last foot patrol before returning to the city.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Characters from the past**

Once again Doyle found himself walking the streets of the inner city; he could have been a weather forecaster for the weather was as he had predicted cold, damp and foggy. It was now Christmas Eve and as it was approaching 5.30pm the shops were about to close and the last shoppers were leaving the city centre for home. It had been quite quiet in the run up to Christmas; there had been a few bomb calls to British Home Stores and C&A Modes which had been hoaxes. It would have appeared that the terrorists had gone on holiday early. Doyle was visibly relieved, he was glad that there had been no terrorist activity. This fact seemed to show in the faces of the shoppers as they passed him by, some wishing him and the rest of the RUC a very peaceful Christmas.

Soon the shops were closed and the shop assistants now too were heading homeward, all that were left in the city centre were the police, taxi drivers and buses. Doyle let his mind wander back to the sixties when as a young constable he was on mobile patrol in the city centre, and on the lookout for criminals who were engaged in smash and grab raids on shops in the area. He had got out of the vehicle to check on the Bank Buildings which had a grand entrance which consisted of glass display cases, and on entering the semi circular doorway he discovered a middle aged man lying on the ground inside the doorway. The time was 11.30pm on Christmas Eve, at first he thought that the man had too much to drink and had collapsed. At first sight the man seemed well dressed, but on a closer inspection his clothes although expensive were quite threadbare and he was fast asleep. Doyle raised him from his sleep and helped him to his feet asking his name, to which he replied 'O'Neill' from where asked Doyle 'Did you never hear of O'Neill from the Maine' came the reply. Realisation dawned on Doyle this was the title of the Prime Minister for N.Ireland and he knew this man wasn't he. The rest of the patrol had a whip round and enough

cash was collected to ensure that 'Lord O'Neill of the Main' had at least two night's bed and dinner in the Sally Ann. The patrol gave the man a lift round to the Salvation Army Hostel and booked him in. Some time later he again met this man who told him how he had opted out of society. Evidently he had been quite a successful business man, and one morning at breakfast he was as usual listening to the wants of his wife and children, who no doubt given the chance could do away with more money than he could earn. At that point something snapped and he left the house but didn't go to work and never returned to his family since that day. Doyle thought that this was very sad and advised the man to make contact with his family, as they may have mended their ways.

There used to be quite a few people who had dropped out of society around the city centre but of late Doyle had seen no evidence of anyone sleeping rough. One of these characters was forty coats, given the name because of the large amount of clothing that he wore. Now forty coats abode in the winter was the front door of St Anne's Cathedral and Doyle when on night duty used to stop and make sure forty coats was all right. It was quite difficult to find the pulse in his neck as he was wrapped up and on his chest were copies of the Belfast Telegraph inside his heavy top coat. The heat that the old man was generating inside all these clothes was unbelievable, once he had established that he was all right he left and continued with his patrol. One summer while on duty at the \*twelfth field which was then in Finaghy Road North before moving to Edenderry Village, Doyle was checking the tents which had been erected in the field when he got a shock, as on entering one of the tents he heard snoring. He checked around the tent with his torch and discovered none other than forty coats fast asleep in a corner under a table. He knew that the old man must have walked there from the city centre and decided to let him sleep until daybreak, when he went back to the tent he roused the old fellow from his slumber, gave him a ticking off and sent him on his way. Most times these down and outs were harmless enough, on one occasion he had been on duty in Andersonstown sub district when he answered a call to the convent on the Glen road. When he arrived one of the sisters told him that a woman whom we shall call Mary had called at the convent she evidently had drink taken

and threatened to throw a bottle through the window, Doyle ascertained from the sister the direction Mary took and it wasn't long before he located her, she was intent in terrorising a group of people waiting for a bus at the local bus stop. Doyle had no option but to arrest her and brought her to Andersonstown Police Station. On entering the station with Mary in tow, he nearly gave the Station Orderly a fit and was ordered to take her back outside with the retort that the fleas were known to jump at least forty feet off her and the Station orderly didn't want fleas in his station. Doyle was left standing outside the station with Mary until the van arrived, when the driver saw Mary he said to Doyle to put her in the back and get in with her as she was bound to leave a few fleas behind when she left and he didn't want to be scratching half the night. Doyle learned a lesson from this encounter with Mary, if you see her move her on and don't arrest her as you would soon run out of friends. When he finished duty that night he spent most of his time in bed scratching at imaginary fleas. As he went towards Musgrave Street Police station he thought, changed times, there were no characters left.

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*Back to Belfast*

The training courses had started and once again Doyle was training young officers in the skills of tracking down and apprehending terrorists. It was difficult to change police officers who had been used to searching premises for stolen property to keep from opening cupboards and drawers in premises which they were searching for explosives. The Provisional IRA was apt to leave a booby trap device to injure or kill some unsuspecting police officer who chanced to come on the scene. Doyle remembered one such incident which claimed the lives of two of his colleagues some years past. A CID officer had located a shotgun in the search of some premises and had returned to the police station with it. He took it to his office where there was another officer and began to make the weapon safe before examining it. Unfortunately as he released the barrel catch to see if it was loaded the gun exploded killing both officers.

This was why Doyle did his utmost to make sure that if the young officers were to make any mistakes that they made them in training and not in the field. He therefore made the training as realistic as possible by arranging a few surprises for anyone who chanced to make a mistake. After opening something that was accompanied with a loud bang the young men soon realised it was wiser if they were suspicious of something to leave it alone and ask for assistance from the ATO. Although training duties kept Doyle busy he was also tasked to other incidents at which his specialist knowledge was required. Late one afternoon after training he was sitting at his desk compiling the first reports on his young trainees when the phone rang. It was Superintendent Hanrahan. 'Can you come up a minute?' asked the super 'Yes said Doyle 'I'm almost finished' On entering the Superintendent's office Hanrahan beckoned Doyle to a seat offered him a cigarette and lit a cigar for himself. 'Just got word that the Provies have kidnapped an influential business man you'll probably hear it on the 6 o'clock news when you get home.' 'Is there a ransom demanded?' asked Doyle. 'Not to my knowledge' replied Hanrahan 'It's too late now as it will be dark soon, but tomorrow morning you will have to take a search team up to Armagh; the powers that be think he may be held somewhere in the south Armagh murder triangle.'

Doyle made his way to the duty room and consulted the duty sheet; he noted down six names and handed them to the duty officer with a request to inform the men to parade at the Section at 0600 hours in the morning for duty to Armagh. He then left for the night and went home. Shortly after six am the following morning saw Doyle and the six officers travelling towards Armagh City. Although early June the morning had a slight chill and there was a fog hanging over the M1 Motorway, Doyle thought that the fog would soon lift to leave a very warm and sunny day. His thoughts turned to the business man and his family he could imagine how worried they all must be and hoped that the police efforts to find him safe would be fruitful. On arrival at Armagh RUC Station Doyle consulted with the Chief Superintendent and soon he was briefing his men and assigning them to search parties. They had all left the station for their various areas of search by 0730 hours. This was to be an all day search covering a large part of the County Armagh border with the south of Ireland.

## **Our friends in the Garda**

The morning was much as Doyle had expected, the sun had burned off the mist and the day was becoming quite warm and sunny. He found himself attached to a party of police from County Fermanagh, and their officer was a very friendly young Inspector, also in their number was a Military Police corporal. The area of search was quite close to the border and as the day wore on and the usual search of derelict farms and outhouses had taken place with no sign of the businessman or his captors. The patrol stopped for a rest and some refreshments in a small wooded area. After resting for a short while the inspector had consulted his map and suggested that they should continue searching in a more southerly direction.

Later in the day and coming onto a minor road leading to a more major one the inspector drew Doyle's attention to what appeared to be a traffic car complete with blue light on a minor road leading off the major one. Doyle became a bit uneasy as he had spotted a few of the hay sheds were painted green in the fields further down to his right and was suddenly aware that they may have strayed over the border into the south of Ireland. His fears were soon realised as the car on the other road reversed back and on the passenger's door Doyle saw the insignia of the Garda. He pointed this out to the inspector telling him to stop and take cover in the hedgerow. As the police car pulled out onto the main road and headed towards the road that the patrol was on, Doyle stepped out into the road and signalled the car to stop. When the car came to a standstill Doyle shouted a warm greeting to the young police officers 'How's it going then' 'Not bad came the reply I suppose your looking for this business man too.' 'Yes we're up from the crack of dawn but not a sign of him or his captors in this area, what about yourselves?' 'We have had no luck either' replied the observer 'I don't think he is anywhere hereabouts, more likely to be in the west of Ireland' 'Maybe so' said Doyle. 'Can you get this guy Eamon O' Malley on your radio?' asked the driver. 'No why?' said Doyle 'We can and he thinks I don't know how that the business man is being held in Dublin somewhere'. 'Maybe he's

right but we'll have to go on now, take care'. Doyle had been quick to spot the Irish Army Land rover that was giving the Garda cover approach along the side road and move in behind the police car and he wasn't prepared to spend the night in Dublin Castle. He knew it wouldn't be long before the Army would do a spot of map reading and learn that the RUC patrol was in the south of Ireland. As the Garda car moved off followed by the land rover an English voice shouted out from the rear of the land rover have a good day. It could only happen in Ireland an Englishman in the Irish Army.

Doyle went back along the minor road and met the inspector coming towards him 'Let's get the patrol back up the road and into the fields heading in a north westerly direction quickly' said Doyle. 'OK but what's the mad rush.' He asked. 'The Garda are all right but the Army after they consult their maps will realise that it is we who have crossed the border and it won't be long before they notify their HQ' It wasn't long before he was proven right. The patrol had only covered a couple of miles across country when an orange coloured helicopter approached their previous location from behind the crest of a hill not to far on their right, it hovered for a short period evidently checking that the patrol was heading north back across the border banked and flew off from whence it came.

The rest of the patrol was uneventful and they returned in the early evening to Armagh RUC Station and a well earned tea. After the debriefing Doyle and his officers returned to the Section in Belfast and there was a good ending to this kidnapping the business man was returned to his family safe and sound.

On returning to Belfast Doyle went along to his office and on the way purchased a cup of coffee from the vending machine in the canteen pulled back his chair took a cigarette from the pack lit it and sat back and relaxed for a while before he wended his way homeward. As he sat and watched the blue plumes of smoke from the cigarette drift slowly up towards the ceiling his mind returned to the 1950's he remembered the story of the young probationer constable just newly assigned to Belcoo RUC Station in County Fermanagh from the Training Depot in Enniskillen.

The station was manned by a sergeant and four constables and after being there a short time the sergeant decided to send the young officer out on his own to do a bicycle patrol. After showing the constable the route he wanted him to take on the station map of the sub district and ascertaining that the young man knew where he was going he sent him on his way. A long period of time had elapsed and the officer hadn't returned to the station. The sergeant became concerned about the young constables welfare with the passing of time. However much to the sergeant's delight and relief he saw the young man cycling down the street in the direction of the station. On entering the station the sergeant enquired how the patrol went. To which the young constable replied it went well but he thought that the people in that part of the sub district hadn't seen a policeman for some time as they stared at him when he cycled past. After once more consulting the map of the sub district the sergeant ascertained that the young Constable had inadvertently strayed across the border and had carried out most of his bicycle patrol in the Republic. This was a common enough happening in most of the border police stations and the locals on either side of the border were used to seeing police from either force on patrol in their area.

When Doyle had realised that the patrol had strayed across the border he had as his wont taken the initiative relying on the premise that the Garda weren't sure if it was them who had strayed he stood out in the road and stopped the police car. There were always good relations between both police forces and that is why he wasn't unduly worried about the Garda, he was apt to be more wary of the Irish Army whom he had rightly surmised would consult their maps and reports the incident to their HQ. It was good to know that the RUC could make a mistake in direction and not end up incarcerated in Dublin Castle. Doyle had spent an enjoyable evening in the Garda Club in Dublin in the company of his friend Joe who was a sergeant in the Garda and his colleague Leslie from the Royal Ulster Constabulary. He had also close contacts with his counterpart in the Garda who was engaged in similar work in the south of Ireland, both he and Kieran had attended meetings together and Doyle had invited Kieran and his wife to stay with him in Belfast coming up to Christmas to enable

them to buy presents and abide by the twenty four hour resident law which meant that they didn't have to pay duty on their presents. However Kieran declined the offer as he wasn't too keen to stay when the troubles were still going on.

## Chapter 10

### A Change of Direction

The village nestling in among the Sperrins had been quiet since Doyle and the original station party had left. The new station party were going about doing what police all over the world do and that is to make sure that the local populace are keeping the peace and not breaking any laws. Of course the method of doing this varies from country to country. In Ireland as a whole the police forces usually combine looking out for road traffic offences with the important task of keeping tabs on the movements of known terrorists. This was most disconcerting to the would be terrorist who would rather his movements weren't monitored in any shape or fashion. It depended very much on the level of activity shown by the police as to whether or not it was advisable to engage in any nefarious goings on.

It had not gone unnoticed by Father Ted that the village now resembled the village he had known when he first came to it as a young parish Priest. He had also observed that the tall lean police officer with the piercing blue eyes had not been seen patrolling the village with his colleagues and thought that he must have been sent elsewhere. There was another strange happening his sharp eyes had caught sight of a lost lamb returned to the fold in the form of Seamus O'Farrell the local Provisional Commander who was in the company of an attractive young girl by the name of Maeve Farrow from out the road a piece, he thought to himself God does work in strange ways, here was a man Ted had never thought would be in his church again. Granted he had not seen Seamus at confession, but this was a start which maybe heralded a change of direction for the Provisional IRA. He had also noticed Barry Flynn accompanying his mother Mary to Mass on a Sunday morning; this led him to believe that the local Provies weren't going about their usual IRA business with as much gusto. 'Praise to the Lord' he thought if this was the case and the Provies were turning to more politically tried means to gain their objective, it might herald the end of all the killings and bombings. He would light a candle and give thanks to God for sending peace to the little village.



The reason that Seamus and Maeve had been attending church was that they had been going steady for the past few months, and when you are walking out with a girl in Tyrone you are deemed to be engaged. However it is a well known fact that Tyrone men are renowned throughout the land as being believers in long engagements and not rushing into marriage. Like the man who passed Doyle's uncles house who was engaged to the same girl for twenty nine years and still hadn't married her. It was easy to see that this wasn't going to happen to Seamus and Maeve as her father was quite elderly and in poor health and would soon have to be placed in a nursing home in the town. Maeve would be of course then left alone in the farm until such time as her brother was released from Long Kesh which was now HM Prison Maze. Seamus thought it was about time he was settling down and knew that Maeve would make him a good wife, not just immediately but soon.

Father Ted had started to plan his summer vacation, he had been invited by an old friend who was the PP in a parish in North Antrim to come and spend some time with him that summer. Ted had agreed partly because he had found out in a letter from Reverend Charlie Stewart who also had a parish in that neck of the woods that Jim Burke was the local police sergeant. This meant that the three old friends could meet up again and chat about old times and maybe have a game or two of chess. This thought cheered Ted up immensely as he had missed the company of his two friends more than he was inclined to admit.

The next two months passed quickly there was the usual trouble at July 12 venues but not so many shootings as there had been in the past. The first readings of the Banns were made in respect of Seamus and Maeve, twice more and then the wedding could take place. Things were moving more quickly towards him having to say 'I do' than Seamus had anticipated. He had however got as far as asking Barry Flynn to be his best man, also he had told his father about his engagement. This made O'Farrell senior very happy as he envisaged Maeve keeping Seamus occupied with the normal chores of setting up home to keep his mind off the business

of the Provisional IRA. There was only one blot on the horizon and that was Maeve's brother, Seamus couldn't see the Governor of the Maze letting a convicted bomber out to attend the wedding of his sister to give her away. No matter in the true laid back fashion of most Tyrone folk he decided to sit back and let it all happen.

Father Ted had returned refreshed from his holiday, he had met up with his two friends who were overjoyed to see him again. After much chat about the village and how folk there were faring, Ted telling Rev Stewart and his wife how last Christmas he had a service of nine lessons and carols in his church, and of the good attendance. He also mentioned the sad loss of life experienced in the parish when young volunteers had blown themselves up and how the police had shot up an active service unit which didn't stop at a checkpoint. The Rev Stewart said that it was a terrible loss of young lives and hoped there would be peace in the country soon. He suggested that Ted should try for a parish in the district and told him of the impending retirement of a local PP. Ted promised to think about it, he said that of late the village had been quiet and told of the tall police officer who had come amongst them and policed the village and area as Jim Burke in days gone by only this police officer had six young colleagues with him armed to the teeth. Jim Burke picked up on this and asked Ted if he knew the name of the officer. Ted said he thought he was called Doyle. 'Well I'll be a monkey's uncle' said Jim 'I know Doyle well, he's a Tyrone man and a very fine officer, he'll not sit about, I bet he has the Provies run ragged.' Ted told Jim his words were about right as there was now peace and quiet in the village and it was more or less like it used to be. He did say that he thought Doyle had been sent elsewhere. Jim agreed with Charlie Stewart that Ted should look for a parish near to them and then they could again meet up and play chess. He told Ted that he had his time done in the police and thought of retiring and staying on near to Charlie Stewart. Charlie also said he was going to retire next year and get a house nearby. This was quite tempting to Ted who really had enjoyed meeting up with his two friends again.

He discussed this with the Priest with whom he was staying. The Father told him that he thought it was a good idea and said that Ted should strike when the iron was hot and ask for a transfer. The Priest was also able to tell him that a parish was coming vacant soon near to them. Ted told his friend that he would give it some serious thought. He took his leave from his friends and on returning to the village was given a warm welcome home by his housekeeper Mrs Mary Flynn.

## Doyle's return to the village

That summer passed quietly enough, in Belfast Doyle had uncovered a Provisional IRA bomb making factory in a new building site just east of the city centre. Other personnel from his unit whom he had trained also were fortunate in uncovering an IRA arms dump in a search in County Armagh. There had also been some gains made on the drug scene, with the discovery of a large quantity of hard drugs located in a search of a ship, it was one of his young colleagues from the unit that had been instrumental in locating the drugs. All things that deprived the terrorists of either camp from funds to buy weapons of destruction, also the finding of such arms thus taking them out of circulation and rendering them useless made Doyle feel very happy. He had long felt that both camps were involved with the drug trade to boost their war chests, even though the terrorists themselves were still protesting that they had no hand in the supply of drugs.

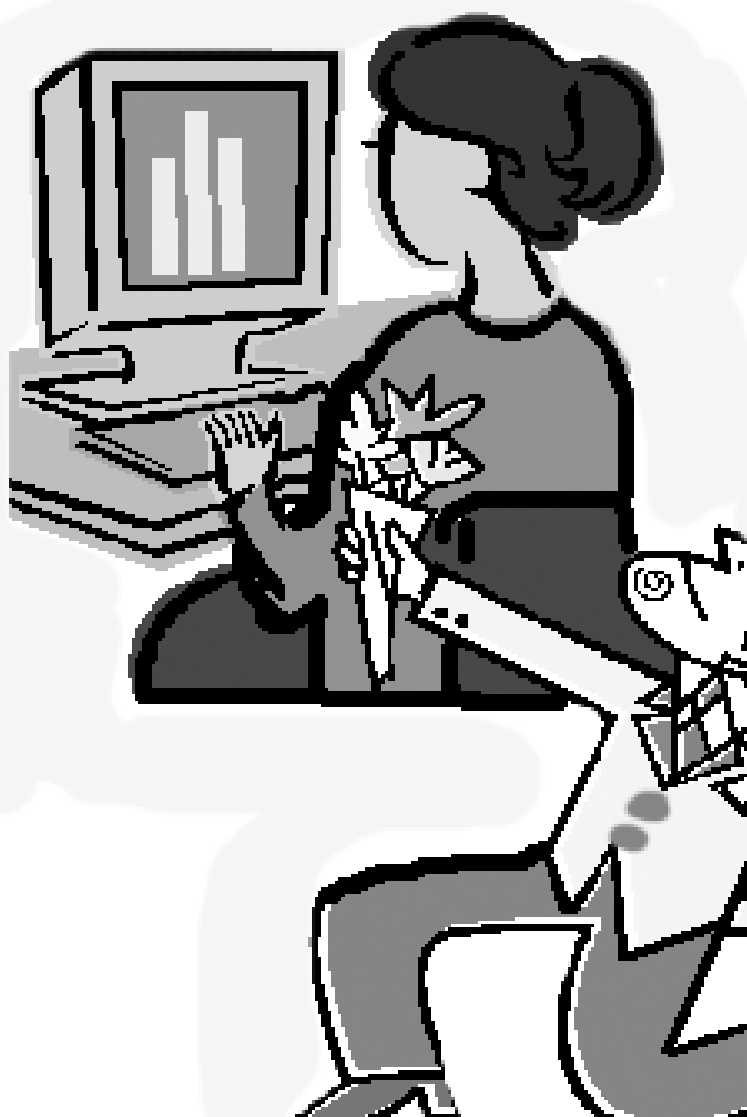
Meanwhile back in the village the second reading of the banns had taken place and there appeared to be no reason why Seamus and Maeve should not be joined together in Holy Wedlock. Father Ted had spoken to the couple concerning the solemn vows they were about to take and the responsibilities that went with the bringing up of children to be good Christians, and also be good and law abiding citizens. Seamus thought that the priest was unduly labouring the bit about being 'good and law abiding citizens', however he let it pass and grunted in agreement. Better to agree and not debate the point rather than get on the wrong side of Maeve, although he loved the girl he knew her to have a very quick temper.

After his talk with Seamus and Maeve Ted retired to his study, poured himself a glass of a good single malt whiskey given to him as a present by Jim Burke before he returned home from holiday. He settled back into his favourite chair, looked at the glass of amber liquid and thought of his time spent in the village. He would be sad to leave the village, his time spent there since retiring from the RAF had been very happy; he loved the village and its

people, sure they had become involved and some had actually become Provisional Volunteers, but basically they were good people, but easily led. The previous year hadn't been good, Ted had seen more death than he would have wished to see, it distressed him to see young lives wasted.

He finished his drink and was yet undecided as to what he should do, he wasn't as young as he used to be and the thought of working out his remaining years in a quiet County Antrim Parish close to the sea and his good friends did appeal to him. The thought of retirement never entered his head. Ted was of the old school of Priests who took Holy Orders as a vocation and not a job, furthermore he loved being a parish Priest. When he got to the kitchen he found on the table a cold meat supper laid out by Mary with a fresh white linen cloth placed over the tray. That's another thing he couldn't take his housekeeper with him and she was a gem, he would most certainly miss her, best not to dwell on the subject, after supper he retired to bed still pondering the dilemma he found himself in.

# The Proposal of marriage



by  
Jacko

Doyle too had been giving some thought to his future. He thought he was getting too long in the tooth to be chasing terrorists who were nearly half his age, maybe Brian Macomb was right when he told him to look for an office job and join him at Brooklyn.

He knew he would miss the cut and thrust of action in the field and the pitting of his wits against the men of evil. He had taken the oath to serve Her Majesty to keep the peace and to protect life and property to the best of his ability, how could he do this tied to an office desk. Try as he might to argue the point it kept returning to the fact he was good at his job and was best suited to what he knew best. With that thought in mind he got up from his office chair, lit another cigarette and left for home.

September had come and gone, harvest had been gathered in and the preparations for the wedding were well in hand. Seamus and Maeve were now a familiar sight at Mass on a Sunday; the wedding was to be at Christmas, Maeve still living in hope that at this particular time of year her brother might be released from prison for the day to give her away. Somehow I think that this was very unlikely. O'Farrell senior was overjoyed with the thoughts that his son would be married by Christmas and that being a husband and a provider would give him no time to get involved with any schemes that might be hatched by the Provisional IRA to free the country of British Rule. With this thought in mind everything in the garden seemed rosy.

I have mentioned on a couple of occasions throughout this tale that things have a habit of not turning out as one would have wanted. This happened to be one of those times. With the harvest in and the dark evenings setting in the local Volunteers returned to their usual habit of paying a visit to Mulligan's where they talked of past times and quaffed a few pints of porter. The local police had been going about their lawful business quite uninterrupted and had taken to doing routine patrolling which suited the Provisionals as it meant that they were again staying behind in Mulligan's long after closing, after all what more could one do to while away the hours during a cold dark winter's night. It had not gone unnoticed that Seamus O'Farrell was missing on most of the nights much to the

annoyance to the others who said he was a changed man since Maeve got a hold on him. The village had truly returned to its former days when the rule of law and the Queen's Writ had meandered along every highway and byway in the county.

This was all soon to change; it was a frosty November night, much the same as any other night for the time of year. There was a full moon and it cast its silver rays along the main street of the village as the last of the patrons filed out of Mulligan's bar. Barry Flynn who was the last to leave made his way homeward along the street in the direction of the police station and his house. He entered by the front door, climbed the stairs, shrugged off most of his clothes and tumbled into bed and was soon fast asleep. Father Ted had been up late working on the sermon for Sunday Mass. He had already partaken of a light supper, before turning in he poured a small glass of malt whiskey, lit a cigar and walked to the front door of the parochial house. He stood on the front porch smoking his cigar watching the blue smoke curl up into the night sky and sipping his whiskey. How quiet the village slept it looked quite peaceful and serene in the pale November moonlight. He extinguished the cigar, closed the door and crossing the hall he made his way up the stairs towards his bedroom. Soon he too was asleep.

Mulligan had closed up for the night, counted the takings and with a smile remarked to himself that if Mrs Mulligan wanted a new coat again this winter he most certainly could afford to buy it for her, only the coat mind nothing else, one shouldn't squander all the profits as the provies didn't appear to be to flush with cash at the moment. He too was soon fast asleep in bed.

While this was all going on in the village, Seamus O'Farrell was motoring homeward after spending the evening with Maeve. As they were only engaged it wasn't proper that he should be seen as having stayed the night at her house, village folk were apt to talk to others of such goings on and most certainly the church in the large form of Father Ted most certainly wouldn't approve. Hence the need for him to take his leave of Maeve and head homeward.



The only other to be abroad that night was Sean O'Rourke the principal of the village school. Sean had been attending a teacher's conference in Newcastle Co Down and was glad that he was on the last lap home. He approached the village by the low road which meant he had to drive past the police station and along the main street before reaching the schoolhouse. He too remarked to himself how quiet and peaceful the village was. It was good to that there were neither Provisional IRA nor RUC road checks to impede a lawful and very weary citizen from reaching his front door and then his bed. On entering his house Sean located the cold meat repast that his wife had left for him before she retired to bed. After he had partaken of the meal and washed it down with a hot cup of tea he glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece it showed the time as being 2am. He put out the light ascended the stairs and was soon sleeping the sleep of the just.

Barry Flynn was thrown out of his bed and crashed against the wall; there had been a rushing sound like a great wind then a blinding flash and a deafening explosion. He was shocked and dazed, ceiling laths and plaster had started to cascade down from where the ceiling once was and cover him in a greyish dusty shroud. He found himself gasping for breath and felt a warm wet feeling somewhere about the right side of his head. Barry couldn't comprehend what had happened he just sat there on the floor, watching in disbelief the billowing shreds of curtains caught up in the now glassless windows of his bedroom. He heard a loud banging on his front door, pulled himself painfully to his feet and went down the stairs and opened the door. Standing there was a young RUC Constable with a bandage on his head which was stained red from a wound in the officer's head. 'There has been an attack on the police station, you will have to leave your house sir' said the officer. 'All right' replied Barry. 'You all right sir?' enquired the Constable. 'I think so' answered Barry. 'If you come with me I'll get one of our blokes to tend the wound on your temple.' 'No I'll be fine' replied Barry. Suddenly realisation had dawned on him the police station had been on the receiving end of a mortar attack; Barry thought that he was lucky to be alive. He walked out onto the street and looked up at his home which was now lacking a roof. Further along the street police officers were

helping colleagues while other ones were asking residents near the station to vacate their homes. Barry went up the village to the estate where his mother lived.

Father Ted had been awakened by the loud explosion and realised that this must be a terrorist bomb, but where, he got up and dressed, then looked out from his bedroom window. Down the main street towards the police station there was a pall of smoke still rising from the rear yard of the station. Ted left the parochial house and made his way in the direction of the station. The sight that met his eyes made him feel angry; there were a few police with injuries mostly to the head, face and legs. He saw a young inspector with a bandage on his head and one arm in a makeshift sling. He appeared to be directing operations. 'Can I be of any assistance to you?' asked Ted

'Not really Father but thanks for your offer' replied the inspector 'Well may I help in any way?' asked Ted. 'We need to evacuate some of the villagers until we make sure there isn't any secondary device.' replied the inspector 'If you could see that the parochial hall is opened for the residents to have some place to stay as it is freezing. It would be most appreciated.' 'Certainly I'll attend to that immediately.' Said Ted and with that that he went back to the parochial house to get the keys to the parochial hall.

Mulligan too had been wakened by the explosion; the force of the blast had shaken the bottles of spirit and toppled a few glasses which smashed into pieces when they hit the floor. After getting out of bed and making sure his premises were all right he refrained from going out in the street to see what had happened. He thought he would only be in the way and couldn't see how he could be of any assistance.

Sean O'Rourke was also awakened by the sound of the explosion, he immediately got up out of bed, dressed and made his way to the parochial house. He met Ted coming out with the keys of the hall. 'What's up Ted, where is the explosion?' 'The police station has been hit.' remarked Ted. 'I'm just on my way to open the hall as the villagers near to the police station will need somewhere to stay until it is safe for them to return home.' 'I'll come along and help'

replied Sean. The two men went to the hall where they found a number of the villagers had already arrived. There too were Mary Flynn and Barry. When he had told his mother what had happened she had dressed and went to the hall. She suggested to Ted that some tea would be in order and proceeded to fill kettles and put them on the gas stoves. Other women of the village gave her a hand with the tea making. The villagers at the hall were all in a state of shock and still slightly dazed. The tea would perhaps help to bring them round.

Seamus O'Farrell didn't hear the news until next morning, he had thought he heard a rumble of thunder in the early hours of the morning but couldn't be sure. When he heard the news of the attack on the police station his blood ran cold. This could mean only one thing the place soon would be thronged with police and army and most of the ASU if not all would be lifted under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and carted off to be questioned by the Special Branch of the RUC some no doubt would be spending Christmas in the now re named Prison called The Maze. He being a commander would be most certainly a prime suspect for the attack and he was sure that he would be in the Maze for Christmas. His first thought was to high tail it to Maeve, but he decided against this and thought it better to act normal as possible and not do anything to draw attention to him. With that thought in his mind he dressed forgot about breakfast and headed for work. He would have normally gone to the town via Maeve's smallholding which would bring him past the police station he decided to go the upper road thus avoiding both the police station and the village.

Doyle too had only heard the news as he was eating his breakfast back home in Belfast. He quickly finished and drove towards his headquarters. He wondered how the men at the village station were; the news just stated a mortar attack and some police injured. It didn't say how many or how badly injured. This was the one thing Doyle had dreaded, he knew that a barrack buster landing in the right place could do lot of damage causing horrific injuries to anyone in its path. On arrival at his station Doyle made his way to the Superintendent's office. Hanrahan was already at his desk. 'Obviously you have heard of the terrible happening at the village

station.’ He stated ‘Sure, how many casualties?’ asked Doyle ‘Don’t really know as yet, only heard what was on the news. The telephone lines appear to be out of order’ replied Hanrahan. ‘However I have already been on to Brooklyn, it would appear that the DMSU’s and local police have with the aid of the military run a cordon round the villages and nothing gets in or out without passing a road block.’ ‘That was quick.’ said Doyle, ‘let me take some men with me to assist with any searches or lifts that the Special Branch might be organising.’ ‘That’s all right by me I’ll let you know as soon as we get the all clear to proceed.’ Doyle then went about the routine duties that were given to him by the Super.

The following week saw Doyle and a party of specialist officers headed in the direction of Tyrone and the village nestling among the Sperrins. It was 3am in the morning. They reached the police station in the market town around 4.20am. The station yard was full to capacity with both military, uniformed police and CID officers. Doyle entered the station and made his way to the briefing room, it was already full to overflowing, and he noticed the large form of Paddy Sullivan who now had attained the rank of Inspector. He made his way over to him and said ‘Good to see you Paddy and I’m glad someone saw fit to promote you, congratulations’ ‘It’s all your fault Doyle’ said Paddy ‘ I kind of got used to going out on patrols and sat the Inspector’s exam and got it and here I am.’ ‘It probably serves you right for listening to me.’ Doyle replied. Just then the Chief Superintendent entered the room and the briefing began. It would appear that there would be large scale searches and arrests at dawn in three of the villages. This would be coordinated by the Special Branch and the CID both of whom would be leading the searches and carrying out the arrests. Everyone was assigned their tasks and there was nothing to do but wait for first light to begin the operation. Doyle sent his party to the canteen to avail of some breakfast as previous experience had taught him that it might be some time before they would have the chance of another meal.

There had been a deathly hush over the village since the attack on the police station. The volunteers and the political activists alike

had been keeping a low profile, they were all very worried men, none relished the thought of being carted off and interviewed by the RUC Special Branch whom they feared most. The Special Branch were the faceless nameless men whom you didn't know how much they knew of you and fear of their means of interrogation brought to your ears by others who had suffered at their hands and told you that under the pressure they had cracked and divulged more about the Provisionals than they had intended to, adding that no man no matter how strong willed could withstand their means of questioning.

To add to the volunteers' dilemma was the fact that with a ring of steel surrounding the village they were always being stopped and searched every time they set foot outside the village. This was also grating on their already frayed nerves and quite a few questioned why the authorities were waiting and not acting immediately against the Provisionals. Surely the powers that be knew for sure it was some element of the Provisional IRA that had caused the explosion at the RUC Station, some even wanted it over and done with to get piece of mind. Father Ted also felt the sombre mood in the village, it was as if a mysterious fog had enveloped the village and hid it from sight, as if the village was hanging its head in shame. He was still free however to attend to sick parishioners both at their homes and in the hospital, the police had placed no restrictions on him. However he was searched every time he left or returned to the village. His communion box one made of plain wood and which had been used by a Padre in the Great War was taken gently from his holdall by a young constable opened then closed and replaced in the bag with the words from the officer 'Sorry Father you may continue'. Ted would thank the officer and continue on his way.

Seamus too was very worried , he had began to call again with Maeve on his way to work, this was the only time the two had a time to chat as Seamus hurried straight home from work and waited for the knock on the door which would surely herald the arrival of the police to arrest him. He had told Maeve that he was certain when the police finally decided to act that he would be arrested and placed in HM Prison Maze and would no doubt be

spending quite some time there. Maeve consoled him and told him no matter how long it was she would be there at home waiting for him and promised to visit with him as often as she could. He promised her that he or as far as he was aware none of his men played no part on the attack on the police station but was sure that the Special Branch would not believe him. Maeve told him that she believed him when he said he had no part in the mortar attack.

The other person to be going about the village with a worried look was Barry Flynn. He was purposely avoiding Mulligan's and also avoiding O'Farrell and the other volunteers. Barry took the view that as he was a victim of the explosion himself that the authorities would deem it very unlikely that he would have been involved with an attack that could cause injury to himself and if he didn't be seen with any of the others he might if he lay low escape being lifted. Mulligan too thought as he was an upright business man and an honest citizen that he would be left alone. The one thing that irked him was the fact that Doyle the year before had come into his bar after hours and he wasn't that sure then that Doyle believed him there was no one on the premises but himself and his wife, and what if Doyle had by some means learned the identities of his visitors of that night. It didn't bear thinking about; he kept the thought that he might be left out of having to answer the awkward questions of the Special Branch.

Dawn came and with the dawn came the police and military in great numbers, Barry's belief that he would be left alone was short lived. He had just got up and had his breakfast. When there was a knock on the front door, he opened it to find a large man in civilian clothes accompanied by quite a few uniformed police standing there. 'Barry Vincent Flynn' asked the detective. 'Yes, what do you want?' enquired Barry. 'I am arresting you under the Prevention of terrorism Act, you don't have to say anything, but anything you say will be taken down in writing and given in evidence.'

Replied the Detective and with that Barry was led away, while the other police searched his home.

## The Briefing



## Like an avenging angel

Father Ted had awakened from a restless night in bed unaware that the police and military had begun their search and arrest procedure on the Active Service Units in the village and surrounding areas. He had not been sleeping well since the attack on the police station. He had partaken of a light breakfast and was just having his first cigar of the day, when he was startled by the sudden appearance of Doyle coming out of the November mist accompanied by a strong party of police and army. The mists surrounding them made them appear to be ghostly figures rather than real men. As Ted watched them approach he noted the grim look on Doyle's face and realization dawned on him. This police officer had returned to the village as an avenging angel to seek out and prosecute the perpetrators of the dastardly attack on the station which left some of his young colleagues bearing the scars which would remain with them the rest of their lives. This time there would not be the cheery wave and friendly grin, this time the officer meant business and soon Ted was sure that there would be a lot of empty chairs around family tables this Christmas, one thing was certain that they would be filled again after the occupiers had served their time at HM Prison Maze. This would not be the case in many police homes where the chairs formerly occupied by fathers, sons, or brothers who served in the RUC had laid down their young lives in the service of the community, these chairs would remain empty.

Ted felt the urge to go to this officer and say how sorry he was about the mortar attack, but knew that this was not the time; the officer was preoccupied with the task in hand. Doyle although deep in thought spied the priest in front of the parochial house, he liked this man and wished he had known him better, he was past just as he thought about giving him a wave, never mind thought Doyle I'll maybe see him again.

The patrol arrived at the top of the village where the task was to search the home, shop and outhouses of Mrs O'Dea. Doyle knew



of past encounters that the lady in question had a sharp tongue and she would most certainly not be pleased to say the least that her house, shop and outbuildings were to be tramped over by a lot of peelers in big dirty boots. He had been proven right as when the special branch officer had said that he was going to search her property under the Prevention of Terrorism Act she showed displeasure but was so surprised with the sudden and unannounced arrival of such a large party of police and military for the moment was lost for words. Doyle was at a loss as to why the special branch had decided to search Mrs O'Dea's place as her son was already serving time and he was sure O'Dea senior wasn't involved actively with the local PIRA. However this was a special branch operation and he was only there to assist.

Meanwhile another party of police and army had arrived at Seamus O'Farrell's smallholding just as Seamus was about to leave for work. When he saw the police the colour drained from his face, a large special branch officer in civilian clothes approached him and said 'Seamus James Michael O'Farrell' Seamus hadn't been addressed with his full name since he was christened, well maybe once or twice since then when his mother caught him doing something that he shouldn't. He was a bit taken back, hardly recognising himself and replied in a shaky voice 'yes that's me' 'I'm arresting you under the Prevention of Terrorism Act for being a member of an illegal organization. You do not have to say anything but if you do it will be taken down and given in evidence' continued the detective. Seamus found himself cuffed to a uniformed officer while the others commenced a search of the house, car and farmyard. Seamus was thinking fast had he burned all the documents that could have incriminated him and cleared out any bits of uniform and emblems that would tie him in with the PIRA. He must have as he had been busy engaged in this task for quite some time. He was interrupted from his thoughts by the approach from one of the outhouses by a young constable carrying a clear polythene bag inside of which was Seamus's favourite rifle. His heart sank how he could have been so stupid; here was ten years in prison staring him straight in the face. 'This yours' enquired the detective. Seamus didn't answer there was no use in incriminating himself, let them figure it out for themselves.

Liam Megaw found himself in a similar predicament to that of Seamus. He was just leaving for work when he was confronted by a party of police, after ascertaining his name he was read his rights and immediately handcuffed to a police constable while a search of his property was carried out by the others. Some time later uniformed sergeants approached and after a few words were exchanged between them and the special branch detective Liam was marched over to his hayshed. On entering the shed Liam couldn't believe his eyes for there in front of him was the uncovered hide he had constructed about eighteen months ago to store a few bits of explosives and detonators, it consisted of a couple of wooden doors placed over bales of hay which had a hollow in the centre for hiding things, then in turn other bales of hay were thrown on top making it look as if the complete stacks of bales were solid, Liam had forgotten completely about the hide with so much other things going on. Evidently an inquisitive young constable had been probing the hay and come on something solid where his probe should have gone through quite easily, and a further search had uncovered the hide. Liam saw a long jail sentence hanging over him but he was sure he wasn't going to take the blame for blowing up the police station.

The ATO \* wasn't happy about the state of the explosives, he decided it was too dangerous to remove them and thought it was better to blow them up in situ. The police agreed and as Liam watched with the police from a safe distance he saw his hayshed disappear in a cloud of smoke. After the cloud had cleared all that was left was a smouldering ruin of what was once a hayshed. Liam thought as he was being driven away in the back of a land rover I bet I'll not see a penny of compensation for that hayshed, they'll say I did it myself and it was all my fault.

It had been a long day, the tired police and military had returned to the county headquarters in the town for a debriefing. The Chief Superintendent was pleased with the results; all the players that they had intended to arrest had been successfully caught in the net. When the debriefing was finished Doyle made his way along a

corridor in the direction of the canteen when he met O’Farrell coming towards him being escorted by two detectives. Seamus recognised Doyle and said ‘Excuse me sir would you be able to let my father know where I am?’ Doyle thought that this was some cheek but as he knew and liked O’Farrell senior he agreed.

\* Army technical Officer



## The Epilogue

On leaving the headquarters Doyle asked his driver to go in the direction of the village, taking the high road which would bring them past the village station and to the right of the village. By this route they could go to O'Farrell senior's smallholding without going through the village. Once Doyle made a promise he tried to keep it.

They were just passing the village station on the upper road; the November sun had burned the mist off and was sitting like a blood red orb low in the late afternoon sky. The rays had lit up the white concrete walls turning them into a pale shade of red. Doyle asked the driver to stop. He alighted from the vehicle lit a cigarette and stared down at the police station. He remembered reading the story in the Bible of the two men who built houses. One built on sand and the house was swept away when the storms and floods raged. The other house which was built on a rock withstood the storms and floods and still stood firm. The little village station reminded him of this story; he thought that it too would withstand bomb and bullet, storm and flood for generations to come, because of the stout hearts of oak which served the community from within. It saddened him to think in years to come the only thing that could end the life of this proud little station was the pen of some government minister who may never have heard of the station or the brave young men of the RUC who served there. It troubled him more to think if the station could be done away with at a politician's whim so to could the proud name of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. After all it was Bill Craig the Minister of Home Affairs in the Stormont administration who had closed border police stations and signed the death knell of the Ulster Special Constabulary. Many men of the Constabulary had given their lives in the performance of their duties as they assisted the RUC to police Northern Ireland. He put out his cigarette got into the vehicle and told the driver to continue.

As they trundled in to the farmyard O'Farrell senior had heard the vehicle approach and was already at the front door, when he saw Doyle alight from the vehicle his heart sank. Doyle approached and asked if he might come in for a minute. O'Farrell senior beckoned the police officer inside and showed him to a chair in front of the fire. 'Bad news?' asked O'Farrell. 'Not good I'm afraid Mr O'Farrell your son Seamus asked me to call and let you know he is all right but has been arrested and brought to the County Headquarters for questioning' replied Doyle 'Can I see him?' asked O'Farrell. 'I'd leave it until tomorrow and then call at HQ,' said Doyle 'Thank's for letting me know.' replied O'Farrell. 'Not at all I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news,' said Doyle 'He was to be married next month I was so looking forward to him settling down' said O'Farrell. 'Try not to worry too much I hope things work out for you' said Doyle and with that he took his leave of O'Farrell senior and continued his journey back to Belfast. Once more he found himself back in the city centre for Christmas, thankfully things were quiet. As always there was the last minute shopping rush on Christmas Eve. Needless to say Doyle and his men were the last to depart the city centre. He had managed to avail of leave until the New Year. Over the holiday period he was bothered by the operation carried out in the village by Special Branch, some thing's didn't figure in the equation. Firstly if O'Farrell senior had been right and Seamus was intending to marry Maeve at Christmas, why would he jeopardise everything by taking part in the mortar attack on the police station. Secondly If Barry Flynn knew of the attack on the station why was he not able to avoid injury to himself in the attack. Barry wasn't stupid he would have ensured that he was either with his mother or staying with friends, and why were Hare the young commander from the mountain village and his adjutant Glover not on the list of suspects to be rounded up. Things didn't add up no matter how he wrestled with the facts. The other thing odd was that Doyle sensed the hand of Brian Macomb in the operation, especially the ring of steel around the villages a few days beforehand, keeping the volunteers in a state of nervous anxiety . He was determined to look Brian up when he returned to duty after the holidays.

Father Ted had spent Christmas in the village and taken all the Christmas Masses, he also held a Watch night service which to his surprise was well attended. He noticed O'Farrell Senior and Maeve in the congregation at all of the services over Christmas. It had been a sad time for the villagers with some families having Fathers, sons , or brothers in prison. Ted thought no matter how sad a time their loved ones were still alive.

It was early in January that Father Ted was summoned by the bishop to attend at the bishop's palace on the last Tuesday in the month. He was surprised at the summons and wondered what His Lordship could want with him. However on the appointed day he drove to the Bishop's Palace in the county town. On arrival he was shown in to one of the downstairs drawing rooms by the bishop's secretary. Just as Ted had seated himself in a comfortable armchair, the door opened and in came the bishop. Ted stood up but the bishop beckoned him to sit down. 'You have been a parish priest for some time in the village' said the bishop. 'Yes My Lord, quite a long time' replied Ted. 'Well Father Craig I have to inform you that this will be for no longer as the Cardinal, the Primate of all Ireland, had elevated you to the position of Canon at St Patrick's Cathedral Armagh, and furthermore has requested me to inform you that you are to leave the parish next month and take up your duties as the Primate's Private Secretary.' Ted was lost for words, this was indeed a great honour and wouldn't his sister be proud of him. He only wished his parents could have been alive to see this great honour being bestowed on their only son.

The Bishop had gone to a side cupboard and produced a lead crystal decanter from within and two glasses. 'You'll join me in a small whiskey to celebrate your good fortune?' enquired the bishop. 'Yes My Lord I should be honoured.' The bishop reached one of the crystal glasses to Ted and told him that he would be expected to take up his duties at St Patrick's on 25 February. The bishop also told Ted to make the announcement at Mass the following Sunday.

The following Sunday Ted found it hard to tell his flock that he was moving on to a new job in Armagh, as he looked down from

the pulpit at the congregation he saw that tears were trickling down the face of his housekeeper of so many years. He felt a lump in his throat, it was going to be hard to bid farewell to Mary. However he contented himself in the knowledge that she would look after the next incumbent just every bit as well as she had cared for him during his time in the village.

The evening before Ted left, the villagers held a party for him in the Parochial Hall. The hall was full to capacity; you would swear it was bingo night. At the close of the festivities they presented him with the most beautiful Tyrone Crystal decanter and a set of whiskey tumblers. Telling him they would look well on the sideboard of his new parochial house. Ted felt the tears well up in his eyes and his big heart nearly exploded against his chest. He said to them ‘Thanks for all your kindness to me, I’ll miss you, more than you’ll ever know’ and with that he took his leave of them for the last time.

There would be two Irishmen one the big hearted Priest who was now moving upward and onward, and one tall lean RUC Officer with pale blue eyes, both of whom would take with them for the rest of their lives the images of this sleepy little Tyrone village which nestled amongst the bushes and mountains of the county in which both served their people. The priest would long be remembered with affection by the country people but the police officer sadly would soon be forgotten, even though both men played a big part in the life of the village.

What of the other one, Doyle had started back to work and was trying to figure a way in which he could see Brian Macomb, accidentally of course and not by design. He hadn’t to wait too long for an opportunity, Hanrahan was known for his late submissions of his time sheets, and chance would have it Doyle’s squad mate from his depot days was the ACC in charge of the administration side of the section and Hanrahan’s immediate boss. The Superintendent wasn’t averse to having Doyle call with Basil McAleer at Brooklyn for a chat and to hand in his late time sheets. Basil of course had told Doyle that he didn’t have to let himself be used by Hanrahan and he could call on him at any time. Just a

time presented itself at the end of February, Hanrahan called in with Doyle at his office and asked if by chance he would be going past Brooklyn and if so could he deliver a despatch to the ACC Q1. Doyle said that he would and that very afternoon made tracks for police Headquarters at Brooklyn. He made his way to Q1 and soon was outside the ACC's office. He knocked and entered. Basil was pleased to see him and after the two had exchanged chat about what they had been up to over the holidays Doyle casually asked Basil if he had seen Brian Macomb. 'Sure did you know that he is the second in command at special branch here at HQ?' asked Basil. 'No that's a new one on me.' said Doyle.

That explained a lot thought Doyle, the light was beginning to dawn. 'Would you like to see him he's only along the corridor a bit' asked Basil. 'Sure' said Doyle. Soon both men were standing in the office occupied by Macomb. Brian was glad to see Doyle; Basil left them and returned to his own office saying to Doyle that he would see him later. 'I might have know' exclaimed Doyle 'Trust you to get head of the special branch, I saw your hand in the village affair with the ring of steel and then the search and lift operation.' 'Not so fast it wasn't all my doing' replied Brian. 'Others had a hand in it, I can't take all the credit.' Doyle told the \*ACC of his concerns that all the players involved with the attack hadn't been lifted and some who had not been involved were and he couldn't equate the matter. Brian told Doyle he hadn't changed telling him he was still poking his nose in where it wasn't wanted. He told Doyle it was quite simple Glover and Hare were under surveillance both night and day by both the \*SB and the SAS. There hadn't been sufficient evidence to sustain a conviction for the attack on the police station, but a lot of useful material had come their way by means of the volunteers who had been lifted not wanting to take the blame for the attack. It had also come to light that the mortar attack on the police station had been planned for the year before but had to be shelved because of the high powered policing brought in to being by Doyle.

\*ACC Asst Chief Constable \*2 SB Special Branch

The Chief Superintendent told Doyle that the local ASU's had to be taken from the equation to give a free hand to the undercover



operatives to track and monitor the movements of Hare's Group of Provies. 'So it's a watch and wait game' said Doyle. 'Very much so', replied Brian. 'Getting back to you what have you been doing to get yourself fixed up with a desk job?' asked the Superintendent. 'Nothing as yet as you can see I'm still trying to tie up loose ends' replied Doyle and with that he took his leave of Brian promising to visit with him again in the near future.

Doyle hadn't long to wait for the answer to his questions. It was about the middle of October, he had returned from Scotland from a short break before the winter set in when one morning he awoke to the news that two active service units of the Provisional IRA had been engaged in a fire fight with a military foot patrol on a main road which ran past a small mountain village in Co Tyrone. It appeared the ASU were trying to attack a van and its driver when a foot patrol of military had chanced to come on the scene and engaged the IRA. All members of the Active Service Unit were killed, there were no casualties reported on the side of the military.

Doyle sat back in his chair in the living room of his home, staring at the television screen. He now realised that the operation in the village and the lifts were part of a bigger picture. The Police and military authorities had eliminated the local village volunteers and got them locked up in prison for being members of an illegal organisation. This meant they were offside and out of the way and couldn't by any means jeopardise the undercover work that was underway to get the main culprits who carried out the mortar attack. There must have been word of a UDR soldier who was part time and the driver of a delivery van being targeted by the Provisionals from the mountain village. It was clear to see that the SAS had bullet proofed the cab of the vehicle and it was one of their men who had been the driver. The military patrol that attacked the terrorists was no doubt a SAS patrol, no wonder all the terrorists were dead. This was as clinical an operation as Doyle had ever seen. This would be the end of the Active Service Units of the IRA in this part of County Tyrone. It was at long last a check mate, and he had to take his hat off to a master chess player whom he had the privilege to have played a game or two with.







*By Jacko*

## The arrival of Canon Craig

Ted had arrived in Armagh and had settled in to his new position as secretary to the Bishop. He had also settled into the new parochial house, this was different from what he had been used to. For a start there was the Dean of the Cathedral, another Canon by the name of Lynch and one Parish Priest and two curates also living in the house, he wondered to himself were there any chess players amongst them, time would tell.

The house was run by a very formidable housekeeper by the name of Katy O'Donnell, Ted thought it would be a brave man who would get on the wrong side of her, and she was aided in her duties by two maids and a handyman gardener. The parochial house was very large and of a mixture of Georgian and pre war architecture, reason being as Armagh City was the seat of both the Church of Ireland Primate of all Ireland, and the Roman Catholic Primate of all Ireland, the parochial house needed to be added on to house the increasing number of clergy within its walls. The new wing was tastefully constructed to complement the rather austere Georgian style of the main part of the house.

Ted liked the way in which the French style windows at the rear of the building opened out onto a paved terrace area and extended to a large well kept garden with rose arbours and hedged gardens where the gardener had plots of potatoes, cabbage, beetroot, and other vegetables growing, no wonder then thought Ted that the culinary expertise of the cook was complimented by the expertise of the gardener who supplied the household with such excellent vegetables. The meals were superb and the accommodation most comfortable, it was like living in a five star hotel. If Ted had to explain heaven to any unbeliever he thought it would do all right to compare heaven to the parochial house.

His duties of secretary kept him busy as the Cardinal was always on the go, couldn't sit still for long and always up to his eyes in some problem or another. Ted learned that the Primate was very

friendly with the Church of Ireland Primate and that the two met up on quite a few occasions, some public engagements and others private. This was another side of a cleric's life that Ted was experiencing for the first time. He thought this job was a bit of all right and although primarily a pastor dedicated to pastoral work he was getting to grips with his new appointment. This didn't mean he forgot his parishioners in the small Tyrone village, no, whenever in church he would offer up a prayer for their well being and many times during the warm month of July and August he would after dinner, venture out onto the terrace, light a cigar and walk among the rose arbours of the garden thinking about the village which he loved, and when in his room and before retiring for the night he would pour a small malt from the Tyrone decanter into the crystal glass and as he sat in his favourite chair sipping his whiskey his thoughts would return to the village.

He thought too of the tall lean police officer and wondered where he was and what he was doing; Ted wondered if he too might be thinking of the village.

The summer had passed quickly for Ted; he had accompanied the Cardinal to the Vatican and was privileged to have spoken to His Holiness. On their return to Ireland there were the usual TV interviews, mostly concerning the Orange parades and the trouble caused at the flashpoint areas. Ted was aware that the Church had no policy on Orange Institution marches but the Cardinal and the C of I Primate had always when being interviewed appeared to be singing from the same Hymn Book as both had made it clear that their wishes were their respectful parishioners should refrain from getting involved in any sectarian trouble and as always the one cleric backing up the other one.

August had been a quiet month; this was a blessing as July had ended with the usual rioting and stone throwing in the two major cities Belfast and Londonderry. There had been little trouble in and around the city of Armagh, unusual thought Ted as Armagh was classed as the murder triangle. By the middle of September Ted was due some time off and elected to spend it with his friend

at his home in County Antrim. Off he went armed with a bottle of Black Bush as a present for his friend. When he arrived at the little parochial house in the picturesque Co Antrim village he was greeted by his friend of seminary days. After the evening meal both men retired to the sitting room and chatted about their student days. Ted's friend congratulated him on his elevation to Canon and said it was well deserved. However he did bring up the subject of Ted moving to County Antrim and voiced the opinion that it was now very unlikely. Ted hadn't given much thought to the retirement angle and made a mental note as he agreed with his friend, to see Charlie Stewart and Jim Burke and let them know of his new appointment. As the two clerics sat sipping a glass of Black Bush in front of a warm coal fire, Ted mused how quickly plans change.

After breakfast the next morning Ted phoned the Reverend Stewart and made arrangements to meet up with him and Jim Burke the local RUC Sergeant the following Sunday evening. His friend had asked Ted to preach the sermon at the 11 O'clock mass on Sunday; this was to show off Ted's new position as Canon to the parishioners. It was quite a normal occurrence for visiting clergy to 'preach for their supper' as the saying is, so Ted didn't mind and it was quite some time since he had preached a sermon. This was where he now was more an administrator than a pastor. The rest of the week passed quickly and the Sunday evening found the three friends sitting by a large log fire in the Church of Ireland Rectory, even though it was the end of August the weather had become quite chilly. This was one of the reasons Mrs Stewart had set light to the fire in the morning room, the other being that the central heating was not to be used until the month of October by request of the select vestry.

Mrs Stewart often wondered if the select vestry had to live in the Rectory would they be so adamant on the heating not to be used until so late in the year. She had on occasions about September time when Charlie would have the select vestry up to the Rectory for a meeting purposefully not lit a fire in the room that the meeting was taking place, after which she was admonished by her freezing husband who told her that that was not a Christian attitude to freeze the Select Vestry half to death. She retorted with the

words that they may have been cold but she had after all made them tea and sandwiches, and that by not lighting the fire they could experience for themselves how cold the large Georgian building was at that time of year.

Charlie had poured out three whiskies into crystal tumblers and also poured a sherry for his wife who had just joined the friends. He raised his glass and toasted Ted on his elevation to Canon, at the same time telling the others that he too had become a Canon in the Diocese of Connor. This brought another toast from Jim Burke who made the remark that he thought his two friends were trying for purple, and having reached the positions of Bishop and Cardinal neither would be in the mood for entertaining a mere Sergeant of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The two clerics assured Jim that if this unlikely happening were to occur it would not make a jot of difference to their friendship. Jim replied that he at least when he retired next year and put his feet up he would be only fifty three, reminding the other two that they would be eligible for their bus passes next year and would be still having to work on a Sunday. For his cheeky remark he got pelted with two cushions thrown by Charlie and Ted.

After a very fine tea provided by Mrs Stewart, the three friends once more adjourned to the morning room with their coffee. The talk soon came round to the village Jim Burke was the first to open the conversation. 'Were you still in the village at the time of the lifts Ted?' 'Yes, I was up and about when I saw the police arrive to make the arrests, Doyle was there too, and not his usual self but appeared gaunt and stone faced.' 'That would figure' replied Jim. 'He wouldn't have taken kindly to the police station being attacked, especially if it meant death and injury. I can't reason it out why so many were arrested in the sub district.' 'Can't shed any light on that I'm afraid.' said Ted. 'I even managed to lose a new parishioner by the name of O'Farrell who managed to get himself arrested along with Katy's son.' 'You don't mean Sean Flynn was arrested too.' retorted Jim. 'I remember some time ago you telling me Katy's son had bought a house next to the police station, it doesn't seem plausible that he would take part in blowing up the police station when he was residing beside it'. 'Yes



its true' replied Ted 'He even was slightly injured and his home was wrecked in the explosion.' Now Charlie Stewart was a plain speaking man, to who white was white and black was black. He believed that those attending their places of worship were not out throwing stones and petrol bombs; he quickly put an end to this train of thought by putting on his best philosophers face and remarking that the aforementioned persons must have been involved in something or why else would the RUC bother in the first place to arrest them, he further expounded that the RUC were not known to go around willy nilly arresting all and sundry without reason. The other two were left speechless as there was really no answer to that.

Ted returned to Armagh at the beginning of September, and once again resumed his duties of Secretary to the Cardinal. The month of September flew in and it was now just into October when Ted realised he hadn't as yet done his Christmas shopping, he was going to be spending Christmas with his sister and her husband in Belfast. No doubt any of the Craig clan that was in the near vicinity would be calling at her home to welcome Ted and to congratulate him on his new appointment. There would be the usual gaggle of nieces and nephews for which Ted had not purchased any presents, not to mention his sister and her husband; he made a mental note to do some serious shopping before the end of the month. There was a fairly good chess board and pieces in the main drawing room of the parochial house but none of the incumbents appeared to be chess players. The two young curates were more times than not watching a film on the television The Dean was always busy and when he had free time he would spend it with family members in Armagh City. As for the Cardinal he probably did play chess but was most times occupied with church business well into the night



*by Jacko*

It was the middle of October; the weather was dry and bright but had just a hint of winter in the weak hazy sunshine. The roses in the garden of the parochial house were well past their best and there was the hint of yellow and brown leaves strewn across the lawn. Ted liked this time of year, but knew for many it heralded a time of dying for the trees and marked the onward rush of the dark dreary days of winter. As he walked across the lawn hearing the dry leaves rustle as he absent minded shuffled his feet as he walked he reflected on the fact that the Almighty was indeed a very accomplished artist, many a good artist had tried to capture the beauty of the changing seasons but it was he and he alone that could paint the most magnificent canvass. Ted was a simple man he saw the hand of God in the beauty of all the seasons of the year, his faith was as simple as his philosophy, he believed that God had put him on this Earth to help people, preach the Holy Scriptures, and administer to the sick and needy. His new position somehow didn't equate with him being drawn to more of a pastoral calling, however as he finished his cigar and made his way back to the house via the gardens and terrace he acknowledged that God knew best and he placed his life all those years ago in God's hands he was happy to carry out the Lords wishes whatever they may be.

Ted entered the house and was just passing the room where the TV was when he heard the Northern Ireland News starting, what he heard made him stop in his tracks and enter the room to hear the announcer say that there had been an incident close to a Tyrone village where an armed IRA gang had attacked a delivery van and had been engaged by a foot patrol of Army that had been operating in the vicinity, there had been no casualties on the Army members but all of the IRA gang had been killed. Ted was stunned; he went to his room, poured out a whiskey and settled back in his chair. His thoughts went to the young priest in the village Chapel who would have the unenviable task of laying more young lives to rest. Realisation soon began to take hold; Jim Burke thought that it was strange that the villagers had been incarcerated in H.M.Prison Maze. Ted now knew the significance of this remark. The village ASU had been removed from the chess board, they had only been pawns in a larger game, and somehow they were removed to aid larger chess pieces manoeuvre more easily on the board and in so

doing create a check mate. Ted thought that this had not been a chance meeting between the Army and IRA; it had been meticulously worked out by a master of the game of chess. He made his way into the Cathedral went to the alter rail and asked God that there should be no more killing and loss of life in the little village that he loved. He also offered up a prayer for the families of those who had departed this life. As he returned to the parochial house he once again thought of his friends and the good times they had spent in the little Tyrone village which nestled among the foothills of the Sperrins.

## Her Majesties Prison Maze

Seamus had already completed eleven months in prison; it wasn't as bad as he had been led to believe. The Tyrone men had periods of association which they preferred to spend together rather than mix much with the other inmates. He already had five visits from his father and Maeve, these visits cheered him up immensely, Maeve whose father had passed away and her brother had been released from prison on parole had moved in to Seamus's house. Her brother had said there was no reason to move out but, she had told him that there was no one in Seamus's and she felt she should be there looking after the place until his release. This had pleased Seamus and he had made up his mind to do his time quietly, causing no trouble with the hope of gaining remission and a speedy release.

It was about the middle of October, and was the custom after tea in prison the inmates would congregate in the TV lounge to watch the local and national news. Seamus was seated near to Barry Flynn when the news broke about the IRA being involved in an attack on a van near a Tyrone village when they were attacked by a military foot patrol, it was reported that all of the IRA members were killed at the scene, with no military casualties. You could have heard a pin drop; all the prisoners were transfixed to their seats in disbelief. Some prisoners after getting over the initial shock lifted light chairs and threw them against the wall. This resulted in prison officers appearing and threatening a lock up early if they didn't behave. Seamus kept his own councils he was stunned at the thought of such a terrible incident, he had to get his head round this. It didn't take him long to work out that this must have been an operation organised by Glover and Hare and their men, it didn't take a brilliant mind to work out that the pair had probably targeted an unsuspecting UDR soldier who was also a delivery van driver and thinking he was a soft target set out to ambush him only to be ambushed themselves by a patrol of SAS. It must have been the SAS as there were no prisoners, this he thought was a clinical operation which was to make sure all the protagonists were eliminated. He couldn't help shivering, boy were we not lucky we

didn't take on the police or the army, much better to be locked up in prison than to be lying in a mortuary waiting for someone to identify you.

He was abruptly brought out of his reveries by Flynn who was now sitting close to him. 'Do you think it was the village in the mountains that the ASU was from?' enquired Flynn. 'Don't really know, but I suspect it was Glovers boys who bought It.' retorted Seamus. 'If the peelers were after them for the attack on the police station why did they not arrest them?' said Barry 'I don't know, however it's better to be in here than lying dead on the side of a road, isn't it?' replied Seamus 'Quite right it's lucky for us we were put inside, keeps us out of it and away from the Army Council.' said Barry. 'Yes lets do our time and get out next year and start living again, so as I can marry Maeve and you can get back to your mother and see about that house of yours.' retorted Seamus. With that the association time was over and it was time for lock up. As he went back to his cell Seamus reflected on all that had happened and resolved that when he was released he would marry Maeve, settle down and have no more to do with active service in the IRA.